

MY MIND A KINGDOM

*By the same author*

A TENEMENT IN SOHO  
NEIGHBOURS

# MY MIND A KINGDOM

*by*

GEORGE THOMAS



*With an Introduction by*

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

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# INTRODUCTION

## I

SOME years ago (to be more precise, it was in the autumn of 1931), a most unusual book came into my hands. It made a deep impression on me, as indeed it did on everyone to whom I introduced it. My ordinary experience shows me that most outstanding books of a publishing season are forgotten in two or three months, but in the case of this particular book, I find that the ordinary rule does not apply. I have only to mention it for people to exclaim, 'Oh yes, of course I remember . . .' It was called *A Tenement in Soho* and it was by an unknown author called George Thomas.

Reviewers fall easily into the habit of throwing big words about, words such as 'genius' and 'unique', which should rightly be saved for rare occasions. They are words so freely and gratefully repeated by publishers in their advertisements, that they cease to have any meaning for us at all. I am glad to think that I employed no such words in my first estimate of *A Tenement in Soho*. I was a reviewer then myself, giving a fortnightly talk on new books on the wireless, but on looking up what I had then said about this particular book I was pleased to find that I had expressed my very real admiration in moderate language. My praise had been implicit, rather than rhetorical. I had stuck to the facts, even as the author himself had stuck realistically to the facts of his own extraordinary and difficult existence. I will make no apology for quoting my own B.B.C. talk, since it does

briefly expound the facts contained in that remarkable book, and unless the reader is acquainted with the life-history of the family in the tenement in Soho he will be quite incapable of appreciating the sequel which carries on the same life-history in Ebury Bridge Road, in the present volume.

Of *A Tenement in Soho*, I said:

‘This book is the diary of a young man of twenty-seven. He is the son of a dustman, and the tenement of which he writes is his own home. He has a taste for music, and his education he owes to his own efforts. You may say that there is nothing so very unusual in that. But — and this is the point — this young man is one of a family where four people out of seven, himself included, are almost helplessly crippled by progressive muscular atrophy.

‘This means that, day in, day out, they cannot leave their rooms. They can just manage to see to their own wants, but only with the greatest difficulty. Every movement they make has to be performed with caution, for a sudden or ill-judged movement upsets their balance and they fall. And, once fallen, it is very difficult for them to get up. The author of the diary propels himself about in a chair. His mother, so far as I can make out, is more or less bedridden. His younger brother, aged twenty, and his sister both suffer from the same disease, which is incurable. The house they lived in was condemned as unsafe; large cracks appeared in the walls; housebreakers came, and started pulling it down about their ears before they could find another lodging. They were thankful to have that portion of roof left, immediately above their heads.

'I have given you the blackest side of the picture. You might think that out of this material would come a book so grim and painful as to make unbearable reading. You are wrong. It seems absurd to talk of high spirits in such a connection; but, in fact, the diary is full of high spirits. There are moments of depression, of course; there are allusions to the disaster which has overtaken these people's lives; but for the rest it is full of jokes, good-humour, interest, and natural philosophy. Ada, the sister, remarks that their only grievance seems to be the scarcity of their wants.

'Everything that comes along is turned into a subject for excitement and compensation. The visit of a friend, the quarrels of their neighbours, a bunch of flowers, the sunlight which enables one to sit at the window — small things, but in such a life even the smallest thing bulks large. The writer seems completely unconscious of his own pathos, though he is alive enough to the pathos of other people. And he has an eye for comedy too; the neighbours in the tenement are portrayed with real good Cockney humour.'

That young man of twenty-seven must now be thirty-three. The diary now published was written in 1935 when he was thirty-one. His home has changed its place, for he no longer lives in Soho but in Pimlico, but his circumstances have not changed at all. His father is still a dust-man, working by night and sleeping by day, and he himself and the other afflicted members of his family still endure the same burden of physical disability which most of us would find intolerable. What is really important is that they endure it with the same sustained humour and good-humour as they brought to bear on it years ago. Instead

of accepting their tragedy as a tragedy, they determine to turn it into a comedy:

‘In getting up Dan fell and made rather a noise. Ada in alarm called out “Are you all right?” though what she could do to help is a problem. “Don’t know yet”, replied Dan before moving to see if all his bones were still intact. “Can I help?” asked Ada. “Yes, pour me out a cup of tea and I’ll be in for it.” Dan spoke in tones which suggested that tea at the moment was capable of healing every human ill, especially fractures — however, by that time we knew he was still intact.’

Dan is one of the afflicted members of the family, Ada is another. The diary gives another account, as though it were all in the day’s work:

‘Ada fell out of bed at 2.30 a.m. this morning, but was not hurt — she does things gracefully; although she finished up under the table her feet were still in bed. She slid gently on to her neck. Fortunately Dan was still up cooking Dad’s dinner, so he roused Alfie who got up and replaced Ada in bed. If Alfie had been unreasonable, she would have had to make herself “comfortable” until Dad came in at 4 a.m.’

This gives some sort of a picture of the daily life George Thomas leads. Not only does he have to watch his brother and sister falling helplessly about, but he himself is equally afflicted. He can no longer sit at the piano unless some kind friend crosses his legs for him, which means that he can no longer use the pedals. And on account of the restricted accommodation of the family he cannot even write his books in peace. It is difficult enough for

him to hold his pen, so he practises a style of no-pressure writing. 'Actually if I pressed on my pen it would probably disable me with writer's cramp. It is rather remarkable: one of the things that amazes me continually is that I should go on trying to do things. Sometimes I get a moment of special clear-sightedness and I realize that there is nothing, no condition, that really is a help to me. Everything I can think of is a handicap . . . Sometimes I see my hands and know they are helpless . . . Life is queer.'

Yet nothing really discourages him. He is determined to write. 'Until I can get back to writing, I feel that we only exist to struggle against the trials of each new day, and each day seems a little less satisfactory than the last.'

## I I

He *has* got back to writing. He has, in fact, never stopped writing, for he wrote a novel called *Neighbours* between his *A Tenement in Soho* and his present diary. Frankly, I did not much care for *Neighbours*. It was cast in the form of a novel, and although it was founded on facts of which Mr. Thomas had intimate experience, it convinced me that his gift was for personal record rather than for pseudo-fiction. It is for this reason that I welcome his diary. It is personal, realistic, and true. It tells us even what he had for his tea — which is the sort of thing that a personal diary ought to tell; Pepys, after all, does much the same thing. There is no denying that this day-to-day recording produces an effect of monotony; nothing dramatic happens. 'Mum' falls ill, but doesn't die; Ada goes off for a cure and isn't cured; Dan goes off with a friend in a side-car and isn't killed; one keeps on

expecting something drastic to occur, affecting the lives of all these people, but nothing of the sort ever does, and the diary peters out on the last day of the year with no change between the first day and the last.

So do most diaries.

What we are apt to forget is that diaries are not fiction. The diary of 365 days is not comparable to a short story. It cannot lead tidily up to any conclusion, since life does not ever conclude except by death, in which case the diarist automatically ceases to perform his task, and the last word is said. Fortunately Mr. Thomas lives, in spite of all his disabilities, to write other books and, I hope, to keep his diary. A diary is always worth keeping, and, if frank and true, may be worth more than many invented books.

### I I I

Mr. Thomas has paid me the compliment of asking me to 'edit' his diary. He has given me a free hand to cut out any passages which in my opinion would be better omitted. I have not availed myself of this generous permission. A diary must stand as written, if it is to have any value at all; and even if there are certain irrelevant or insignificant entries, I hold that they must all stand as representative of the writer. Whether Mr. Thomas has a sausage for his tea or expresses his views on Marx, is all equally a part of Mr. Thomas. As a house is built brick upon brick, so does it rise gradually from the ground into a dwelling; and so does a diary build up the personality of the writer in the little brick added day-by-day — a slow and detailed process admittedly, but a solid one in the end.

I think I should perhaps explain here that I have never personally met Mr. Thomas. I know him only through his writings, and through the few letters which we have exchanged. It is only through his writings and (in a minor degree) through his letters that I have been able to estimate the remarkable talent and courage with which he has been endowed. No one who has read his *A Tenement in Soho* can have any doubt as to his talent; no one who reads the present diary can have any doubt as to his courage. Let it be remembered that this is a very ill young man speaking, after reading a somewhat patronizing review: 'I educated myself; I equipped myself with the literary ability to write, and I will encourage myself to do whatever I think I can do, whatever the effort . . . Everything in my life, or nearly everything, encourages me to lie down and die, but I shall not do so — even to please the *Times Literary Supplement*.'

That is superb; that is Keatsian in the grand tradition.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

*To*

*A. M. N.*



MY MIND A KINGDOM

1st January 1935. It is my intention to begin again with my diary this year, because I have come to an important decision; a decision which I have avoided for at least the past two years. With the New Year I always find myself hoping for the better weather, the brightness of the longer days, the sunshine and the wide open windows. My decision is to face up to writing as a profession; with calm and deliberate forethought I am going to plan and write books, and to attempt to get them published. I have been afraid of that thought for years. When *A Tenement in Soho* was published I had the fright of my life. I was nearly ill with worry about it. I could only think that it would interest nobody, and that it was not worth all the fuss and bother people were making about it. But it hurt to think that if it did fail I had shown so much of our lives to no purpose. I wanted the book to justify itself.

The real snag in my decision is the callous intention to attempt to get books published. My first book was a success; these others will be put to the same test, though they are still unwritten.

I had always thought authors were a race apart, a superior clan. Now, I believe it is the work, not the man, that counts: a written effort gains so much from being an expression of mind guided by emotion and experience that, if there is a noticeable degree of conveyance of meaning through words, we say there is Inspiration in the work. I may never achieve that, but I have a mind that intends to try; the rest remains to be seen.

I am beginning to-day to do a book on Lourdes, and meanwhile I shall plan another novel.

This afternoon I renewed a friendship. Her name is Alice and she is twelve years old. Two years ago I made friends with her through my open window; she mothers the smaller members of her family and feels very grown up and anxious about it all. She came in to show me her 'new' dress, a charming blue gown with golden lace in front, and a bustle effect. It looked very nice, but she was a rather faded Cinderella, I thought. I have never seen her look more proud or pleased.

She came again during the evening to play 'noughts and crosses' with me, and to remind me that when she grows up she intends taking me out in my chair. She informed me that she is not going to marry but is going to stay at home to help her mother with the babies. There are already nine children in the family. I did not remind her that the babies will grow up as fast as she will.

Cardinal Bourne died to-day. It is sad news for the Roman Catholics, but it has been long expected by those qualified to know best. I was told by a friend who has authority, in my eyes at least, that the celebrations for his recovery, held not so long ago, should never have been; he had been a dying man for months, and was so when the celebrations were held.

*2nd January.* Had a visit from Cousin Arthur before I was up this morning; we had not seen him for nearly a year. He told us that Cousin Dora's baby now weighs eighteen pounds, and we have not seen it yet. Cousin Beatrice is also married. It makes me feel that I am growing up.

To-day I am feeling satisfied with the start I have made on the Lourdes book. I have lost my fear of writing,

having spent the years between efforts in equipping myself with some extra knowledge of the art.

Alice came in again to-day so we let her nurse a doll, which she did quite happily until tea-time.

Had a letter from M. These simple missives are special events, for she is a special friend of the family; they nearly always arrive on a Wednesday, perhaps because that day is half-way between the Saturdays on which she calls either to take Ada out or to have a good talk.

*3rd January.* Lady X came fairly early to take Dan for a drive to Pinner. Tom, a young friend of Dan's, came down (he lives upstairs) to carry him to the car; he was in time to hurry Dan out of bed and make breakfast for him. When my brother had gone off in the car, Tom swept the living-room, gave Mum and Ada tea and did the washing up. It was very considerate help and we appreciated it.

Lady X we think of as Dan's friend. We have only known her a few weeks. One Saturday early in December last year she knocked on our door and asked for me (we have grown quite used to this since the success of my diary). M. opened the door and the visitor was shown into the front room. Ada talked to her while I finished my breakfast. As I went along the passage there were cries for Dan and he went before me. Our visitor was rather pleased and I arrived just as she was saying, 'I undressed you ten years ago, and I've been looking for you ever since!' As I sat and listened, gradually the pieces fitted together. Lady X had helped at a clinic when Dan had been brought there by Sister Anthony, our Sister-of-Charity. She was attracted to him, but chiefly she remem-

bered the remarks of the doctor, that nothing could be done at all for him, and that there were others in the same family in the same condition. The clinic closed down and the reports on the cases were lost so far as Lady X was concerned.

A few weeks ago, and only a fortnight before she came here, someone lent Lady X *A Tenement in Soho*, and she immediately exclaimed, 'That's the boy I'm looking for!' Dan, who is a humorist at times, remarked, 'There's personality for you', but I overrode his remark with — 'Oh no, that's descriptive ability'. I think Ada was on my side this time, for looking at Dan, she said, 'Once seen, never forgotten!'

All this time I had no idea of our caller's name or how she had found our address; I wanted to know who gave the address so that I could have some mental link with this scene, but Lady X could not remember who had given it to her, though she did say that her niece had shown her the book.

We waited for Dan to come home, expecting him to be rather tired and very talkative. He had to cook the dinner that Dad had prepared. When he did return he was carried in by the man living next door. He sat very still without saying a word. Mum began questioning him, and I suddenly shook my head at her frowning a warning to leave him alone. I had sensed his reactions. The place he had visited was the orthopaedic home at Pinner. He looked up slowly and said, 'I'm not really tired . . . I've been thinking'. We could not interest him in our demand for tea. He lit a cigarette, and announced in decided tones, 'Mum, if I ever grumble at what is wrong with me, I shall deserve kicking'.

Just then Tom came in, sorry for being late, but we

asked him at once to make the tea. He wanted to know who had helped Dan, so we told him the man next door had managed it. 'Not Tiger!' he said. 'Yes', we all announced, 'Tiger'. (The meek little man next door.)

To-night I instructed Ian in four of the ten Commandments. He is a young Catholic who had had practically no religious instruction, but he is intelligent and asks most interesting questions. He comes each Thursday evening ✓

4th January. Read Chesterton's *Criticisms and Appreciations of Charles Dickens' Works*, a grand title for a book and the best part of the whole. Was disappointed in it, perhaps I always expect too much from the well-known authors. I had the same kind of experience when reading *Pickwick Papers*. I found, as I considered, the first few pages were so full of bad and cliché writing that I could not go on with it. As nearly everyone has such high praise for it, the fault must be in me, but I already write so badly that I did not want to absorb more of the same kind of error. I shall get over that sort of careful selection when I outgrow writer's growing pains.

Ada has taken her first book out from Boots Library to-day. I wanted *Love on the Dole*, she *Little Man, What Now?* Dan wanted S. S. Van Dyne's latest — so we sent along the list and back came *The Murder of My Aunt*. Ada looked at it and handed it to me with a frown. I looked through it and gave it to Mum, who likes such tales. She began, and read forty pages straight off, then asked Alfie to help her to bed, when she went into a sound sleep — at tea-time. We did not wake her. Afterwards she said that the book was 'like a diary' — which may be true but I thought it an unkind cut — at me. It gave me the idea

for an article 'Are Diaries Sedatives?' — but I shall not write it.

Spent the evening letter writing. Wrote to Evans, to tell them about our Christmas. My other attempts were to invalid friends. With my friends I write from feeling and I let the sense take care of itself — and it generally does. My most difficult letter is one I send to Miss P. who is extremely bad with insomnia. Two years ago she had a similar breakdown, but this is far worse, as she can scarcely write in a decipherable hand. Writing to a friend under such conditions is very disheartening as one cannot help thinking that perhaps even letters are a nuisance. Sympathy seems most ineffective, but one has to leave all that to the understanding of the sick one. I write two letters a week to her without expecting a reply, but she has sent me two cards and a short note. I am encouraged to write, as last time my letters were helpful, and I was afterwards invited to stay for three weeks, during her convalescence, with friends.

*5th January.* M. came and at once set about preparing breakfast for us — this at about 2 p.m., putting on an overall to keep her clothes from splashes. Saturday has come to be the most important day in the week for all of us.

Was not satisfied with what I wrote about Lourdes last night, so I asked M. to criticize it which she did quite helpfully—

*6th January.* I got up early (about 10 a.m.) as we were expecting Mrs. C. to call at three o'clock. Was amused and sometimes irritated by Alfie's sham

attempt at tidying up. He did try to do it, but as slowly as possible and in the spirit of a game of more haste less speed. I think he sat down to read every paper or magazine he found lying about, but we had allowed him plenty of time.

Just before 3 p.m. Albert and Lil turned up for the first time since New Year's Eve and they soon put the place straight. Alfie, too, decided to put on a spurt and cleaned the living-room and long passage in quick time. His self-confidence borders on callousness sometimes, but as he is a result of our psychological upbringing — my reading and Mum's experience — we do not grumble — much.

When Mrs. C. came in she looked round and asked whether we had pushed the walls back, or something. The room must have been excessively tidy, but we remembered that we had changed the furniture round since her last visit.

She wanted to know if Albert and his wife lived on this estate yet, and suggested that she would see Lord —— (I've forgotten the name) and Sir F. M. to see if anything can be done about it, but I could only reply that I thought the L.C.C. had no control over the Borough Council here so far as the housing policy was concerned.

Mrs. C. is staying in London for a few days and she mentioned that she will be seeing us again in June, when she is to be presented at Court. Mrs. C. is such a fine woman to look upon that I should think it would be worth while seeing her curtsy to the Queen.

We talked of my writing. She was pleased to learn that I had begun in earnest at last, and complimented me on my 'very jolly letters' to her which 'always contained a good joke'.



When she heard I had spent my holiday last year at Worthing, she told us that she used to live in Beach House (which now belongs to the town) and that she had seen a man do the Indian rope trick in the grounds there. I thought mass hypnotism was impossible, but she insisted that the man actually disappeared up the rope. Edward Knoblock lived in the house afterwards, and his open air theatre is still to be seen with its 'flies' cut out of the hedges. I have often been round the grounds with great interest: it is left as though people were away from home, and in one little garden there is a small memorial to two dogs. I always felt regret that the place was so deserted—it has obviously been such a happy and comfortable home.

Just before tea an Uncle Bill and Aunt Flo surprised us with a call. They are an old couple, a Darby and Joan, anticipating their old age pensions as the next milestone in life. They explained that they searched everywhere to find us but failed until Uncle Bill remembered to ask a policeman for 'The Rising Sun'—a public-house he could use as a direction finder, having been in the catering trade and having 'done dinners' there.

We had not seen them for eight years and they were full of news about their ten grandchildren, producing lots of snaps to show girls and boys of all ages, and two babies in the nude looking most natural.

They were a very amusing couple to watch, like two sparrows. Uncle Bill sat with his head slightly on one side, a small bald old man with a perky expression, and not a tooth. When he chewed it seemed as though his lower jaw intended overlapping the upper, and I watched expectantly to see if it would happen. In talking he was a small caricature of Punch. Aunt Flo was a buxom

counterpart, also with no teeth, and an occasional stutter which added the impression of fussy, matronly, chatty birdiness to her appearance.

They had meat sandwiches for tea which they munched heartily. Aunt said she had a set of teeth, but did not use them because her children thought she looked too fierce, and Uncle said he could chew nuts and had done so at Christmas; but also complained of a great deal of indigestion! As they progressed, Aunt said she could eat anything with her g-g-g-gums, but Dan found their limit when he offered them pickles with the next relay of sandwiches. I thought he did it deliberately.

In the middle of this, our priest Father H. came in to postpone our Holy Communion Service a week. When he learnt that Uncle Bill was Dad's brother he began talking to him in broad Cornish, as they were born in Helston. Uncle looked completely bewildered, as he had not stayed long enough in the town to get the dialect (his mother only went home to her parents for confinements).

Father H. mentioned that he would bring Bill C. along soon. He has stayed away since he took my MS. and forgot to return it for twelve months or so. Also, Father H. is to have dinner with a publisher, on Wednesday next, who has my MS. at the moment. I do not like this meeting; the publisher's aunt read and recommended the MS. to him, and I would not be surprised if it were returned over the wines. Father H. attended the funeral of Cardinal Bourne, and afterwards, when it was lunch time, he found himself seated amongst the Bishops instead of the other priests, and so he got chicken and things for lunch instead of just 'cheese and beer', as he put it!

Uncle Bill told us that he had not worked for three years, and added, rather regretfully, that he had hoped

to work until his old age pension became due, but he was put off after forty years' service in one firm as cook. When I heard that I felt myself go red in the face; forty years' work and no pension from his employer! I asked a couple of questions to find out how they lived. They have let out the house in which they had brought up their children (except for one room) and they get three shillings over the rent, and that goes to pay life insurance. Uncle Bill said he did not like the insurance as it was now: they ought to give you half of it while you are alive. What is the good of it when you are dead? Aunt replied that if he went first she would have his and vice versa, but she would not like it to happen. Uncle smiled and said he thought she must be still in love with him after all these years, and she replied that she would not like to lose him. Albert put on some old-time songs to please the old folk and I noticed an amusing item. As the record went on I saw Dad sitting and looking at Uncle Bill (Dad must have sat down to listen in comfort). They were in the same attentive attitude and, exchanging glances, they both nodded at the same time (each with his head inclined to the right) and said, 'You can't beat 'em!' Their reactions were so ludicrously alike that it made me smile. So they passed the evening until Dad saw them off to the bus.

They had spent the Christmas with Aunt's father who is over eighty-four — that makes him a great-grandfather with the prospect of another step up in the next few years. This old man is a humorist, I think. One evening when Aunt had lit the lamp for him he exclaimed, 'Pull the blinds down, girl. We don't want the neighbours garping in at us!' Aunt went to the window but could not see a person or a house; later she learned that the nearest house, a farm, was two miles away.

7th January. Young Paddie came in early to-day and lit the fire and made tea before we got up. He was very useful. We got him cooking and he made some pea-soup. He scraped potatoes and carrots and even the onions before putting them into the soup. How his eyes must have watered over the onions! Then he stood and sliced the celery into such small particles that it could not be found in the soup. He was very proud of himself and thought of looking for a job as cook.

In between his various activities he told us of films he had recently seen. The last was 'The Count of Monte Cristo'. We understood his version until he described how the escaped prisoner was back again a rich man. 'And then', he said, 'someone wanted to kill him. The men got into his room with one of those Gunpowder Plot things — (I imagine he meant a blunderbuss) — and then came the Dagenham Girl Pipers!' I was so amazed that I failed to appreciate the break in the continuity until he added, 'we had half an hour of them'.

M. came in the evening and our talk developed into a discussion on the meaning of Eternal Punishment. It came about through comparing criticisms of Arnold Lunn's *Now I See*, which I liked very much and M. did not like at all. Finally we arrived at a solution from comparison of Divine love with human love. We both remembered some remarks of Prof. John MacMurray on Self-transcendence. 'True love is objective. It wants the other person to be himself and not what we should like him to be. To believe in freedom means to believe in it for others, even if that means that the person we love goes off and leaves us.' I pointed out that that is an idea thought of by a human being, and therefore of possible application to human nature. We think of God with

perfect attributes, and so it follows that God can have that same quality perfectly expressed. The whole point in Eternal Punishment is that it is chosen as a result of our attitude towards the meaning of life here by our disregard of Christian teaching, and having free will we earn the state we get in the future life. I suggested that whether we achieve Heaven or Hell it can in no way affect God's love for us individually, being perfect it cannot decrease even for the damned. We had to leave it at that.

M. came into the living-room from the front room and all the chairs were occupied by Dan's friends. Mum watched and thought that 'Charlie' would be the first to offer his seat, but not one of the boys moved. Mum remarked involuntarily, 'Well, none of you are gentlemen', and, to her surprise, the one she thought least capable of understanding the rebuke, young Paddie, stood up, bowed slightly and indicated the vacated chair with his hand. M. and Mum exchanged amused glances.

*8th January.* Albert came over to-day to clean up for us but had not progressed much when we had an unexpected visitor. Dan answered the knock on the door and called out to us all in the living-room, 'Mum, are we at home to-day?' We entered into the game and replied with an affirmative shout. Dan then announced Lady Y who came in smiling. After general talk about health, weather, Christmas and the New Year, books were mentioned. Lady Y said she had just obtained Hilaire Belloc's book on Oliver Cromwell and that there was another but she could not remember the author. I said that it was by John Buchan and was the better of the two, which decided her ladyship to change the one for the

other as it was a large volume and she must have the best.

She told me that the lady who had introduced the MS. to the publisher related to her how she watched him open it, read a few lines, and smile, which she thought a good omen. Publishers are not so easily won over, but it is a good beginning; though I could wish that the smile came at the end of the reading!

Lady Y had written a letter asking me if I knew three words in the English language ending in 'dous'. I sent her a list of six or seven. It is easy to think of 'stupendous' and 'tremendous', but the third, 'hazardous', is quite elusive. Then, after we had talked about words, we were all asked by our visitor if we could tell the word made up from the letters 'Bac' and 'Kac' and 'He'. Dan spotted it almost at once, which amused Lady Y very much. Lady Y asked about Miss P. and her insomnia, and told me that the late Lord Rosebery had that trouble so badly that he rode about the streets of London in his carriage hoping that would help, and also went to different places and used different beds in an endeavour to get some sleep.

When we were alone I began to prepare for an expected visitor, but just as I was about to wash, there was another knock on the door. Dan again answered and announced Mrs. F. Just as she came into the room Ada fell and had a lucky escape from the fire. She was by the fireplace and in moving touched Mum's shoe; I have never seen hair so near to hot coals and in so much danger. Ada went almost green with fright and we shouted for Albert, who rushed in and rescued her. We have decided to get a wire guard to prevent such scares in future. Falls are common enough and quite dangerous as things are, without other complications. Ada fell at Christmas and has had a stiff neck ever since through striking her head on our dinner wagon.

Mrs. F. did not see anything of this accident, and, because I was not completely dressed, she sat at an angle to me so that I would not feel embarrassed. Albert helped me on with my cardigan. After that, Mrs. F. asked me how I was getting on with my Lourdes book. I said I was doing it very slowly, and truth to tell I find it rather difficult.

Mrs. F. remarked that Ada looked very thin and should eat more. Ada replied that she would if it were cooked for her, and Dan said that the cooking put him off his food. Mum remembered a story of a cook and told it to Mrs. F. There was once a cook who went to the doctor because she could not eat her dinner. The doctor wanted to know if the cook 'tasted' what she cooked, and on being told that she did so asked the cook to put her tastings into a basin, on one day, instead of into her mouth, and bring them along to him. She did so and the doctor said, 'Don't trouble about your dinner, just go on with your tastings; you are doing very well!' While Mrs. F. laughed at that, both Ada and Dan asserted that they did not 'taste' when cooking.

I had a very few minutes left to prepare for Mrs. P. H. who was due at 5.30 p.m., but with Albert's help I was ready in time. With her came Señorita Carmen Del Rio. The señorita sings and plays the piano, and we had a fine time. She gave us songs in Spanish, Italian, German, French and English, and of every kind; ballads, serenades, waltz songs, rumbas; from Schumann and Wolf Ferrari to Haydn Wood and Eric Coates, down to 'La Cucuracha' and the 'Rhapsody in Blue'. She played two songs of mine amongst this mixed company and has taken them away with her to copy. She broadcasts.

Mum would not allow any conversation in her room

during that time. It was lovely to hear songs made popular by such singers as Jan Kiepura, Tauber and others. Haydn Wood's song 'The Unforgotten Melody' is 'inspired' by the 'Song of Songs'.

I was asked to settle a theoretical difficulty in a piece of music the señorita was transposing.

*9th January.* As it was so bitterly cold to-day we were not able to get up early. Dad came home and found us all in bed but was very good about it and lit the fire for us. Dan and I rose just after 3 p.m. and Ada at 5.

I played Dan a game of chess, as he has such a bad opinion now of my ability, and I won. This probably means we shall play every day until he feels the beating has been sufficiently avenged.

*10th January.* Albert came over and insisted on cleaning out the rooms again, we are having the sweep in by Saturday, and as he says our chimney is the 'dirtiest in the neighbourhood', we look like having another spring cleaning on Saturday afternoon.

The nurse came unexpectedly to-day to Mum and Ada, as to-morrow is her afternoon off. She said, 'I was going to come in at 1 o'clock to see if it would be all right to call this evening but I thought you would all be in bed, so I came without asking' — wise person.

Ian arrived early for his catechism lesson. He has a big scratch on his face, and he explained, 'People think I've been fighting, but, being a good boy, I don't fight!' That seems rather priggish in a boy of fifteen, but it is the truth — if I am any judge at all. Sometimes he comes



round here dog-tired but worries through his difficulties.

I have had a bad headache all day, and the place is very smoky.

11th January. Father H. came. I have been expecting him since Wednesday evening to let me know how the meeting with the publisher went, and what transpired. As it is now Friday I could not understand or guess what was keeping Father H. from letting me know the worst. I could only imagine that the priest thought there was no hurry to bring back the MS. However, Father H. said that they had a good talk and spoke about me quite a lot, and that the publisher's opinion is that there is a lot of good in the story, but certain irrelevancies must be taken out; and, unless I was prepared to alter it there was nothing to be done. Father H., remembering my attitude concerning the MS., said that he believed I was not thinking of altering it. The publisher said that I was to be asked about it. My own attitude has always been that I would not change anything in the MS. unless I knew why it should be done, and for that reason also I have not attempted another novel, although I know I have excellent material for one. I shall write to the publisher offering to do the alteration. I can see a blue pencil being used on the MS. very heavily. The MS. of *A Tenement in Soho* is heavily pencilled, but the publisher of that did not take any of it out. I shall be very busy in the near future.

Father H. amused me by saying 'I tried to make him smile but he was a very business-like man, and I could not crack any jokes with him. I even tried to be intellectual but with very sad results!'

Wrote to the publisher offering to follow his criticism. After all, a story can be better for pruning.

Dan has shown me a card game called 'Hasenpfeffer' and we practised a few hands. What amused me were the pronunciations. Dan called it 'Horsefeathers' (which somehow reminds me of the Marx Bros.) and Tom called it 'Hannen Swaffer', which seems to me the best incorrect interpretation of anything I have heard for years!

Was obliged to stay and hear the piano tuned this evening. A tuner can do a piano in about half an hour if the owner is not up to all the tricks, but it takes our tuner nearly two hours — with someone there — and not only for talk! He is a funny, untidy little old man with spectacles and a very ruffled soft collar. His clothes never seem to fit properly, and the rather sheepish smile he gives after every remark he makes, seems like an apology not only for his voice but also his appearance. I feel sorry for him, he used to be very keen on piano playing for his daughter, but she died suddenly from a different disease from that diagnosed by the doctor, and he seems to have gone to pieces since. 'We've still got the piano,' he said to me one day, 'but I don't even trouble to keep it in tune. You see, we still live in the same rooms.' Once again, it was not only an explanation, but an apology. Every time I see his grubby little hands hammering away as he levels up the unisons, I remember that once they must have known considerable pride in playing the popular tunes of the moment in his own home.

He tries so hard to make himself sociable and has talked to me on many subjects. One time it was the Bible. 'I used to read it a good bit, but I didn't like the front part much. It's a holy book, but there was some goings on them days. You'd be surprised! (As though he were

telling me of the latest novel.) I couldn't stand their begats and begats, lots of that, but I gave it up after a while; got fed up with their Jobs, Jacobs, Jehovahs and their handmaidens!

To-day he had a talk about music and books. 'Did I ever mention the wife's nephew to you?' he asked. I shook my head. He wriggled in his chair. 'He had a book published some time ago. No education, you know, plays the piano but don't know a note of music, yet he claims to teach the violin and piano, and get away with it.' He beamed at me. 'Somerset Maugham's a pal of his!' I nodded, and he let the remark sink in. 'There must be something in him, you know, for a bloke like *him* to be his pal!' I agreed, mentally allowing for some exaggeration, and appreciated his deadened capacity for family pride. It was not now because of his own daughter — just 'the wife's nephew' — but it was enough.

*12th January.* Late last night, after I had gone to bed, the place was turned about and paper coverings put over some of the ornaments and furniture in preparation for the chimney-sweep. Alfie put Mum and her bed out of the way of the fireplace, leaving plenty of space. Albert had promised to get here early so as to be sure of tidying up again, and, when he came, he uncovered nearly everything that Dan and Ada had laboriously shielded from the soot to come, and transferred chairs and vases to other rooms.

He made tea and rushed out to buy ham and fresh rolls, which he served to us in bed; I thought mine was luxurious, really hot tea and crisp roll, followed by a short sleep.

The room sounded empty as the sweep began operations, and with the door open I heard his comments on, 'These 'ere fireplaces which force working-class people to have to use gas for cooking. And that there electric — it's more expensive than gas, you know — and those gas fires in the other rooms — they don't ask you if you wants a coal fire 'ere or there, no, you've got to put up with gas — and why? There is some people who knows!' All the time I could hear the rattle and chink of apparatus as he screwed on length after length. I imagined the mess. There is a block of stone in front of the fire on which the grate is placed and the soot in falling first drops on the closed grate and then on to the step: even with the best covers the sweep would make a terrific smother. He began again. 'There is a lot of things about this estate what don't suit me. I went over it, on the quiet with me dog Pongo, when they was putting it up. Saw the foundations and that. I walks in, feeling pleased with meself, and let the dog follow. You know, and you won't believe it, but it's true, soon I was up to me ankles in the stuff. I looked round for me dog Pongo, and 'e was sinking in it, too. I thought about shouting for someone to get me out of it; as I got one foot out the other went in deeper, but me and me dog Pongo managed to get out in the end. There was something wrong with them foundations! You know, there's a canal near 'ere. And that ain't all. The blinking ceilings is all no good, they fall down if they don't take 'em down quick enough. Still, there you are — you ain't asked if you likes a coal fire 'ere or there, so why should the blinking ceilings ask yer — if they gets tired like and wants to drop orf?' There was so much amusement in his tones as he finished, that I imagined he was very pleased at bringing off a favourite joke.

Received a letter from the publisher in reply to mine. He says, 'The point is whether you are prepared to put a good deal more further work into the book and then submit it again for publication, or whether you are not prepared to do such work unless assured that the book would, in the end, achieve publication'.

It says something for the common sense of a publisher who can be human enough not to have the usual conceit associated with their 'imprint' — as though it were an honour for a book to be published by one firm more than another. Certain publishers do get the pick of the market and it seems to go to the head very suddenly — especially if they are successful. There is only *one* test for a book — it *must* be commercial, though it need not be good! According to this letter, mine is not commercial and it is also probably not as good as it can be made.

Played Mr. D. three games of chess; lost two, the first by sheer carelessness. Am recovering some of my earlier concentration, and I expect to win in the future. Mr. D. is a big, jolly man, and Mum can always tell when he 'puts one over on me' by his laughter; she enjoys hearing him laugh.

Hennessy came to-day, and has joined our study circle on the Gospel of John. The fun of this sort of study is that you do not have to accept the interpretation of any tutor. We decided that there is a fine argument on the meaning of 'Son of God' in the tenth chapter of John, where Jesus says: 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, Ye are Gods",' and further on, 'Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, "Thou blasphemest"; because I said, I am the son of God?' They are sons of God who do the will of God, and so, 'Ye are Gods' is correct of the chosen people, but Jesus

makes it something more. From the general He makes it the particular and singular: '*I am the Son of God*', and, the point we agreed upon is, that to the formal Pharisees Jesus *was* blaspheming. It is not always easy to see the truth of their objections. They were not double-faced all the time.

M. was very amused when I stopped Hennessy from answering the questions from what he had been taught as a Catholic. At once, after reading the questions set, he affirmed the divinity of Jesus, whereas we tried to get some knowledge of the contemporary attitude of the people. Hennessy wanted to know how we could be sure of doing that, and I quoted 'Lowly, riding upon an ass', and I saw his face lighten up as he understood. 'You mean that the people would have that prophecy on the tip of their tongues, so to speak, and that they recognized what Jesus meant when he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? Of course, that is why they cried, Hosanna!'

Later we all had a fish supper. Albert and Lil were busy, Lil doing alterations to my suit. They stayed the night. From my bedroom at 2 a.m. I heard Alfie, Dan and Albert discussing motor engines, differentials and what not, and more quietly there were Ada, Mum and Lil discussing bed arrangements; finally, Ada heard the others and told them to 'Shut up'. She also mentioned soap-boxes and Hyde Park — it was what I had been thinking, and I recognized the pointed aptness of the suggestion.

13th January. Have had a bad attack of indigestion and have not been comfortable all day; it frays my temper rather badly.

Wrote to the publisher offering to do any reasonable revision without any obligation on his part.

Heard a talk from Germany on the Saar plebiscite. It mentioned the 'exemplary discipline' of the voters and that, by contrast, the Communists were vile people, as one group attacked a woman who was an expectant mother (how horrified Nazis can be!). It was reprehensible conduct — though one always hopes such things are not quite true. A patriotic old man had a stroke but did not want to die before recording his vote for the Fatherland. It was solemnly announced that he died at five this afternoon. How suddenly one can become a national hero — if it suits! The Versailles Treaty is a hateful and revengeful piece of political thievery. The Germans were trapped into the last war as surely as any country ever was, but, even so, it was only bad luck that lost them the war. They never expected such terrific resistance from the Belgians (particularly at Liège), and we gained some time by sacrificing our army at Mons. In Corbett Smith's books (probably the first war books) there is an instance where a private asks, 'When do we retire, Sir?' An officer's reply was, 'You don't retire, you die here!'

14th January. Had a surprise visit from a friend who called to collect *Science Rediscovered God* (Macfie), a difficult but interesting book. We discussed the Saar plebiscite. Badly wounded in the war, my friend thought it was 'six of one and half a dozen of the other'. We argued a little and I said that the use of the 'Scrap of Paper' treaty was trap diplomacy which anticipated an economic 'squealing point' that would arise from the German economic and, collateral, military advance in world

affairs. The Franco-Belgian frontier was left practically unfortified, while the Franco-German side was ironclad. It was considered that Germany would, in the event of her striking first, approach France through Belgium — and she was invited to do so by the state of the fortifications. It is said by some people that Lord Grey was to blame for that treaty, and, also, that if Germany knew that England would most certainly come into the war, she would have thought twice before invading Belgium. Bunkum! We were not told that the mobilization papers of the Aldershot Command, handed over intact as each new Command came in, anticipated the action of Germany and prepared for it! Grey may not have known the military strategy involved, but he certainly did the thing expected of him by the Powers who signed the treaty.

I did not like speaking in that way to a wounded ex-service man, but my friend ultimately agreed with me.

The sweep's remarks on ceilings that 'get tired and drop off' came very near home to-day. The ceiling upstairs was taken down this morning — it sounded like the delivery of a ton of coal.

Received a fine courageous letter from Miss P. Her insomnia is extremely bad, I am afraid, and there is so little that can be done — even by a doctor. She and her visitors were amused by the humour of my last letters; I get a good deal of fun from them myself at times — so they are of double service. I wonder if it is conceit, or merely simplicity that enables me to enjoy writing?

In the papers to-day there is news of a suicide, only a few houses away; husband, wife and child. It is a tragedy of unemployment — out of work for more than two years. It happened immediately after they had returned from a pantomime. When I read that I thought of the incident



in Galsworthy's *Flowering Wilderness* where the parson, visiting a dying child in hospital, asks her what she would like most, and she asks for pictures. The clergyman says 'God — if there is a God — give her pictures'. They, the suicides, had evidently been given 'pantomime'.

A thought that brings this tragedy very near to me is that we probably still have their signed Peace Ballot paper here.

15th January. Albert stayed until 2 a.m. cleaning the rooms and kitchen. He walked home and met Dad at work on the way.

The place was spotlessly clean when we all rose early to-day for an official visit from Father H. and Holy Communion at 10 a.m. Dan, as usual on these days, got out of bed last; we had no fire alight, but it was not too cold.

After the short service Father H. went from the room in his cassock and surplice singing softly Mendelssohn's 'Hear My Prayer'. I think that he never gets beyond the first phrase, but I may be wrong. Entering the kitchen the singing ceased, and he inquired rather loudly what had happened that the place should be so spick and span. We explained while he put the kettle on for tea. As he put the cups, saucers, plates and things on our dinner wagon, he complained that there was nothing left for him to do. Suddenly, the tidiness probably having suggested something, he began to sing again. We looked at each other in extreme surprise and amusement, for the song began, 'Darling Mabel, now I'm able to buy the 'appy 'ome'! As he made the tea he sang it through, ending with, 'Yours for ever, Joe'.

He served us with a cup of tea each, as he always does,

emulating a friend's butler named 'Fred'. Then discovered that he had not brought in a bread plate. However, the difficulty was soon solved, as the priest, after buttering a slice, slapped the buttered surface with the broad part of the knife's blade, to which the bread adhered, then offered us all a slice each.

We talked about psychology books, chiefly one by Adler on the education of children, and a more difficult volume *The Psychology of Character*, by R. Allers. I told him it was a rather good book, I had read it last summer, and Father H. offered to lend me *The God of Philosophy*, by Aveling, and also *The Unknown God*, by A. Noyes, which I wanted to read to compare it with A. Lunn's *Now I See*.

Freud is out of favour, generally, compared with his 'feeling of inferiority' rebel disciples, but it is not well enough kept in mind that one of Freud's chief principles is that it is the good in man that causes most of the conflicts, not the evil; it is because we are more moral than we suspect, not less moral, that conflict arises. That view is surprisingly Christian. Evil can ignore good, but good cannot ignore evil — as I think Chesterton has written somewhere.

Dan discovered that he had no cigarettes, so he sent Father H. out to buy him some. The priest told us to tell Albert how he appreciated all that had been done and said, 'He has stolen my Crown'. We pointed out that perhaps Albert was more in need of it than he, but Father H. still lamented his lost glory.

Hennessy took Dan out this evening to a party at which there was a conjuror and ventriloquist. They were both mystified by a trick with figures, but Ada explained it in less than a minute.

Have received the letter containing the publisher's criticism: too much dialogue (this is an unusual fault), too many chapters, not enough descriptive or narrative passages. The strangest criticism I have ever seen of a manuscript is contained in the letter: 'pages of consecutive dialogue do not look well in print!'

It is certainly an excellent criticism. I shall need to hold an inquest on the MS. chapter by chapter and balance the contents better. I am inclined to re-write most of it, but I do not like making a lot of re-typing unless it is essential. One weakness in the treatment is entirely my own fault; it is — 'written rather dispassionately from an objective point of view', as the publisher comments. I did it deliberately, as I felt I knew too much about the circumstances to write a 'comfortable' book. That is one reason why it is not commercial.

*16th January.* Ada ill all day. Expect she will be well again by to-morrow.

Received the MS. from the publisher. One chapter is marked off to show how the dialogue can be tightened up.

Luckily Albert came over and looked after Ada. He also put up clean blinds, and helped Dan make a meat pudding; it was too late to have it for dinner so we shall have it to-morrow.

Spent the whole evening searching the MS. Dan helped, and we found a few places to alter.

*17th January.* Funny things do happen at times by coincidence. This morning I received circulars from the Metropolitan College of Journalism,

St. Albans, which offers to teach me how to write articles, short stories or plays — just when I am most concerned with my own MS. Undoubtedly I have yet to learn how to write, but why should I bother with articles or short stories when my mind is bent on mastering the novel? I am going about things the other way round. When I can do fiction properly, then articles and the shorter forms will come easily. One of my troubles at present is conciseness — owing to being uncomfortable while actually writing.

I've got to develop patience in narrative and descriptive writing, and I am learning quickly; I can see more clearly how the best writers have achieved their effects.

Ada also received the circulars, so it is evident that our names have been obtained from some joint undertaking of ours, and we found evidence of that in the circular.

Realized that I have not done any writing on the Lourdes book since I had news of the MS. Now I must postpone it for a few weeks; when I begin again I shall use method — at present I have been writing it at random.

Was very annoyed to read in the *Times Literary Supplement*, in a review of F. S. Oliver's *Endless Adventure*, further comment on Lord Grey which insinuates his failure as Foreign Secretary and blames him for the Scrap of Paper treaty: 'Such a man is capable of producing terrible disasters by his goodness', and the reviewer continues, 'In plain words, Oliver thought that Edward Grey might have served his country better if he had been less careful "to preserve his honour as an English gentleman"'. A man, he holds, has no right to personal scruples when charged to act for his country; the only honour and the only interest that he may consider are his country's: and they must not be considered quixotically.'

Earlier in the article Cavour is quoted: 'What scoundrels we should be if we did for ourselves the things we are prepared to do for Italy.' I want to know why the word 'honour' is used at all here? Furthermore, a Foreign Secretary cannot commit his country however much he may be an English gentleman; he must act under orders and all commitments must be ratified by the government.

There is a very enlightening conclusion to be drawn from these quotations: a statesman may serve his country faithfully (even to helping to prepare a plan that results in a Great War) but in the interest of his country he must be prepared to take any blame the statesmen may apportion afterwards. Cavour spoke the truth! One seems forced to conclude that individually Cabinet Ministers may be English gentlemen (though this is apparently to be regretted) but collectively they may be scoundrels. Lord Grey therefore was an exception, he lived and died an English gentleman; a 'high minded gentleman, borne upwards to a tragic eminence by the love and admiration that his fellow-countrymen have conceived for his personal character', as F. S. Oliver puts it. A tragic eminence, truly enough!

It is a peculiarity of human nature that a group of people will readily do together things that they would shrink from individually, and that applies to Cabinets as well as mobs.

I have read in an American magazine that Lord Grey held interests in armament firms, but, perhaps, if it were true, that may be an asset in a Cabinet Minister, however much it may be questioned in an English gentleman; any way, it is certainly not the only time a Foreign Secretary has held armament shares.

Ian came early this evening, and just afterwards Alice

came in to see me; I played games and drew pictures for an hour for her.

Ada and I stayed up until 3 a.m. revising the dialogue of the first three chapters of the MS., that is half the work on those chapters.

18th January. Wrote a few letters and did my notes for the study circle. Listened to an interesting episode from the play *Hyde Park Corner* which was very good; a complete little one-act play in itself.

Our coalman came to-day and had something to say about a rival coalman on the estate. They both seem to be here at the same time. 'Ark at 'im,' said the coalman, 'Ark at what 'e's calling out.' We listened but could not make out what he was saying, except that we knew it was coal. As he shouted again, our man mocked him saying, 'Can't burn 'em. Coal. Can't burn 'em!'

It was a perfect impression, making a three-syllable cry of 'coalman' in broad cockney.

Stayed up till 3 a.m. correcting the MS. Shall not do it again as I only got  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours' sleep each night, the chance of further sleep being completely destroyed by the alarm clock that wakes Alfie, and, incidentally, the rest of the family. It is one of those old chain and weight clocks and the bell is as loud as a burglar alarm. But, even so, Alfie has slept through it at times!

19th January. Another very full Saturday, with M. here, and afterwards, Albert and Lil. We talk the whole day away very enjoyably, and the wireless seems superfluous. Hennessy came later, just as we had begun

the study circle without him. It was a most amusing time. I made a special point concerning Thomas the doubtful disciple, showing that he was very like Peter in that he was the first to offer to die with Jesus (John xi). Just as we finished the discussion I set them laughing by saying, 'That's one up to the Thomases!'

Albert and Lil stayed overnight after a very busy time cleaning and polishing. They always appear to be doing that, but it shows how little we are able to do without them.

Another long letter from Miss P., ten pages of cheerfulness begun at 8.30 p.m. when facing a sleepless night without a helpful drug. The operating theatre is very near her, and there was a great stench of ether as she wrote. Such a short sighted policy is surprising. How can the doctors expect an insomnia patient to respond to drugless treatment under such circumstances? Ordinary imagination is enough to keep one awake with the smells of an operating theatre so near, as I know from experience. I understood why the letter was so long and begun so late.

Altogether a very happy day.

20th *January*. Nothing doing. Sat about all day browsing in books and magazines, looking for something worth while. Finally settled on Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger*, which I think a remarkable achievement about very little. I found myself reading a chapter then going back and taking the sub-sections to pieces; it was a good exercise in criticism, an example and a warning. There is so much padding, even amongst the tiny details, that I would not care to copy the style, but I do admire the truthfulness of the scenes as an analysis of a

young man. I appreciated the technique but did not care for the too obvious commercialism; it is measured writing, so many words to so much of the narrative, rather like bricklaying.

*21st January.* Mum has acquired a long-desired piece of furniture. Albert and Lil have given her a sideboard and it looks quite nice. Albert set it up, gave it a good polish, and we are all very pleased with it. I have claimed a drawer for my writing materials. There is one thing I do not fully approve of; the large centre mirror gives me a good view of myself — just the part I desire least to see — my face and head of hair. I must have something placed on the sideboard to hide my own reflection. I always seem in need of a hairdresser or a barber.

*22nd January.* Surprise visit from Miss E., the first since before Christmas. We exchanged news. Theirs was a happy Christmas, but it had a sad undercurrent, I think, as her brother from Kenya spent his first Christmas at home since the War. He goes back knowing that he may not have another Christmas at home for years to come.

As she was going I showed Miss E. the publisher's letter; she thought it quite encouraging. She told Ada to keep me up to scratch. I'll 'scratch' all right if Ada does not leave me alone — I don't need goading.

Had a letter from a friend who, after reading Halliday Sutherland's and Francis Stuart's accounts of Lourdes, wants me to write and give her my impression. There is a lot to be said: it is a place where one learns the meaning



of faith as the apostles must have understood it on the day we call Whit-Sunday. This faith then turned the world upside down, or right side up, and at Lourdes each one may know what it was like when they laid the sick and infirm by the wayside, and hoped that as the Son of David passed by they would be cured. One gets a lesson in spiritual atmosphere that stays with one for ever afterwards; one does not cry with the priests 'Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick' (as the friends of Lazarus cried) and forget it easily. Lourdes never fails with a spiritual cure if we seek for it in the proper spirit.

*24th January.* Mum has been ill all day with stomach pains from what she calls 'her lump' — I hope it is not serious, though she seems to be in a good deal of pain. It generally gets better after a couple of days. Albert came over and relieved us of the anxiety of caring for her as he did everything she wanted.

Stayed up very late doing more revising. Dan was very amused at some of the dialogue and has offered his services as critic — in the sense of 'trying it on the dog', a very humble suggestion but well worth accepting.

*25th January.* Mum is still ill. Tiger's wife (the woman next door, who is extremely deaf) came in early on hearing the news and lit the fire in Mum's room. She is a good sort, extremely poor, and one of the most obliging people imaginable.

Albert came over to see how Mum was and also do some housework. He stayed about three hours.

Mum is rather uncomfortable, she can only lie on her

back, and it is painful for her to be helped into a sitting position; she seems a little better, and is getting some sleep.

The nurse came and, on seeing how Mum was, decided not to interfere with her until she has recovered. (Mum was at the time fast asleep.) Nurse is very good indeed, she chats with Dan and finds him amusing. They talked of night nurses as Dan had said that nurse would make a good night-nurse (she came in very gently and talked in whispers). She asked how he knew, and he claimed sufficient experience and made us all laugh with, 'One used to come and wake me up to tell stories!'

Letter from Mrs. P. H. Shall not see her again till March. Her grandmother has died and she has been taking care of her own mother. She told me the date of Carmen del Rio's next broadcast, which we shall enjoy in due course. Also had another good letter from Miss P. My last effort to her has been sent round the family circle because of its humour. It is very pleasant to learn of such appreciation.

Have just realized that I owe nine letters and have no envelopes; must see to it by Sunday.

*26th January.* This very cold weather is a great trial for us all, despite a fire, we seem to freeze. Mum is a little better to-day. M. came as usual. I had not had the chance to shave or put on a clean collar, so for the rest of the day I was a most untidy object, but no one seemed to mind. Ada lit the fire in the end room and Ada and I huddled round it to get warm while we talked. After an hour or more of that, M. asked 'Shall we go home?' so we banked up the fire and went down to Mum's

room, where there was a bigger and warmer fire, and had tea.

Hennessy was late for his share of the circle, but we had a very good talk, which took up all his available spare time. He took a good deal of interest in the statement made by Caiaphas which begins 'Ye know nothing at all' (John xi), where he seems to be warning the council against their proposed line of action that 'One man should die for the nation'; to save them from the Roman wrath. John remarks that Caiaphas's statement is 'prophecy', but we thought that it was only prophecy in the sense that Caiaphas saw that the result of their action might have the reverse effect from what they intended; he implied that it might not be 'expedient' that 'one man should die for the nation'. Expediency is a makeshift meant to have an effect for a short time only, and Caiaphas was the only one to anticipate more lasting results, which would be the reverse of expedient. It is worth remembering that Caiaphas did try to get Herod to condemn Jesus, but Herod saw through their difficulty; it was an attempt to get rid of a miracle worker who was politically dangerous to the power of the Sanhedrim, and the Crucifixion takes on many of the aspects of a 'political murder'.

*27th January.* Eileen Paddie returns home to-day from a tour in a pantomime troupe. We were told she would come to see us as soon as she arrived.

When Eileen came, looking rather like a girl from a convent in her blue coat and black velour hat, she handed each of us a present, and then the fun began. Her mother said she had not had a penny in wages from her, and Eileen said that she was so hungry that she had to buy

extra food; she is the smallest eater one could find, and we were surprised that she could even admit being hungry to that extent. There were sixteen children in the troupe and if there happened to be an extra slice of bread left at tea time (they were allowed two slices) they had to 'guess a number' and the lucky one had the extra slice. Eileen cannot eat crusts or meat, but she said that during the last week she ate everything. She said that it was very cold. In one place they were up to their ankles in snow, and she only had socks.

She described some of her stage antics. She had to go into the ballet, though she cannot yet dance on her toes, and while on the stage she had to keep whispering to the other girls not to move around without her; she walked instead of tripping on her toes, and waved her hands in fairy fashion. She gave us an illustration. She walked bow-legged with her knees poking out sideways and flapped her hands in the most ludicrous manner, more like a scarecrow than a fairy! The girls used to question each other, and the most important inquiry was 'Can you swear?' Eileen forgot herself one day and 'said something' and all the girls looked at her — probably because of confessed innocence concerning swearing!

Eileen is self-conscious about her teeth, she has only half the right number. We asked her why she did not smile when photographed for the newspapers, and she said that she did not want anyone to see her teeth, so she kept her mouth shut tight. She looked at me as I laughed, 'You know why my teeth are like this, don't you?' I did not know, so she added, 'The old girl didn't have her false teeth in when I was born'. Her mother sat through all this without speaking as she is very deaf.

Eileen then explained another newspaper photograph

in which the children were giving presents to the principal. 'That's to make out we got a lot of wages. We got six bob a week; what a lot! One girl handed him a packet and that smelt of scent . . . it was his brilliantine. Another girl had a large packet; it smelt of whisky — he called it his medicine. I had a large packet too, and that smelt — it was his laundry!'

Then she thought of her legs. 'Look at the chaps' (which were all the way up). 'We had to buy our own make-up and had to pay twopence a week for "wet-white". Pay, mind you, for stuff that gives you chaps!'

We asked her if she would go again; she was not sure, but I could tell from her expression that, having spent all her money, she thought it was rather a lark.

We made a party for her, with a home-made cake and some crackers we had saved specially from Christmas. In her cracker she found a cheque for an immense sum which she handed to her mother. 'Here, Mum, my wages!' Her mother looked at the cheque, but had not heard the remark; she made a suitable comment, though. 'Was you in *Cinderella*?' she asked. 'Yes,' said Eileen. 'I thought so, but for a moment I had an idea it was *Aladdin*.'

The snow came to-day. . . . It lies quite thickly on the low roofs of the sheds opposite, and throws a bright faintly bluish light into the room over the tops of the half curtains, as though the snow were alive, for there seems to be an active, glowing radiation coming into the room. It is a cold radiance, but despite that has a considerable charm, like the unexpected moonbeams that sometimes surprise one at night in a darkened room. The birds were chirruping away in the bright sunshine that warmed with an unexpected contradiction in this

snow scene. The sparrows sounded as though they were holding a committee meeting to decide whether it was winter or spring; I imagined them looking round for a robin and deciding in its absence that it is spring, at least off the ground or roof level.

Have had a bad attack of indigestion all day and do not feel fit for anything; cannot be bothered with letter writing.

*28th January.* The nurse came to-day and talked over Mum's trouble; the pain has gone and Mum is feeling better. We were not permitted to call in the doctor in case it was a hospital job. Mum did not want to have her interior economy interesting the surgeons and at her age it is not desirable. The nurse says that the trouble is not what Mum thought it was (something wrong with her kidneys) and as Mum knows nothing about what the nurse thinks it is (spleen trouble) Mum feels better for the talk. As a compromise Mum is taking liver salts — that is about half-way between the two difficulties.

It is extremely cold to-day and it makes me feel frozen to the knees, a most uncomfortable condition. If I sit near the fire I catch a cold, but if I keep far enough away I do not sneeze all over the place; as a half measure I am thinking of sitting with my feet in a basin of hot water. It is a helpful thought, for, if I get too cold, I can always try it as a last resort.

*29th January.* There were twenty degrees of frost in London yesterday, no wonder I felt the cold.

The more I read of politics the greater is my dislike of the whole business. Knowing a good deal of the worst

conditions, unemployment and slums, I find it hard to believe that the Government is really attempting anything at all. There is a good deal of newspaper talk of trade recovery and less unemployment, but I never hear of anyone getting a job, unless it is a young chap of eighteen or so who replaces an older (and, of course, married) man at generally half the wages previously paid. I know of one instance of a married man being sacked and a young fellow being taken on; the married man was getting £2 15s. but now the young man is paid twenty-five shillings. I was told by the fellow himself, and he said, 'What could I do, George? I felt like telling them to stick their job, but it would have got me in wrong with the bureau people'. I said that if he let the people know that he knew how much the previous man was getting it would probably 'be the sack'. It proved quite true, and he was given his cards. He told me that he went after another job at thirty shillings, was accepted, did two hours' work, and then was told that he would be started at twenty-five shillings; he promptly asked for his cards, and thereby loses six weeks' pay from the bureau. It is something that he had enough spirit to give up the job, but he will get little enough sympathy these days.

Recovery and confidence as it is boosted inside the country is a political trick. It is only the relative weakness of foreign governments that disguises the instability of our own. This deterioration in a wholly materialistic system is perfectly natural. Sooner or later saturation point arises from artificial economic values. The good things of the earth and of civilization have a natural utility value and any other value is false. The value of cereals is that there are people to eat them and people who need them; the value of factories that can produce goods, such as shoes

or clothes, is that there are people to wear them and people who need them; destruction of natural produce and the refusal to use idle mechanism for the public good, can only have one result — the will of the majority will prevail. If that is Marxist philosophy it is not my fault — he only anticipated what *could* happen — we, to-day, are sitting by and watching it happen!

*30th January.* We had a visitor to-day, by appointment, but we were late ourselves. Miss A. came at four-thirty, and Ada had just got up; I was washing and had to finish my ablutions with our visitor in the room.

She is a great talker; one just sits back and enjoys it or sits up and argues. We have done both at different times.

Miss A. told us about the Harlem quarter of New York where every conceivable shade of colour can be seen, and the worst kind of mentally deficient mixtures in the whole world. In one family a child may be quite black and the next arrival a Nordic blond; it is impossible to forecast the colour scheme, as it were. In contrast to what she saw in Harlem, Miss A. said the negroes could be spoken of highly as a race. In Soho I have seen a white woman with a yellow husband and a black baby, and in that family the second baby was white. People, who had never heard of Mendel, said some very nasty things.

*31st January.* Dan collects dreams. He has asked me (in my capacity as a meddler in psychology) to psycho-analyse two different people's dreams. One is 'a calamity that never happens — it is always averted at



the last minute' (such as railway trains that never collide). Without knowing the emotion that accompanies such a dream it was not easy to get the probable right impressions, but evidently the dreamer is sub-consciously afraid of a failure in her work, and yet she is apparently progressing and her work getting more secure; if the emotion is a feeling of relief, then my interpretation is correct. The second dreamer always has 'horrid dreams of a cat having kittens' — that is much easier to solve. The young lady is very small, has a boy friend and is afraid she may not hold him. The word 'horrid' shows the emotion. She is also afraid of children, or rather motherhood. The most significant feature of this dream (and it rounds off an analysis that Freud might be pleased with) is that her name is very often used as a pet name for a cat. Whether I am right or wrong does not matter, I have certainly amused Dan.

Lady Y came in for a few minutes. I learned that the publisher interested in my MS. knows nothing about *A Tenement in Soho*. I have been hiding my light under a bushel. He will be pleasantly surprised to learn that my diary has been through three editions. I lent him a copy and told Lady Y the particulars, and the numbers in thousands already sold; also that it has been translated into Dutch and put into Braille. It will mean a better standing if the MS. is ever considered for publication.

*1st February.* This afternoon Dan had a bad accident, the worst that has ever occurred, so far. In the scullery the dinner wagon was in the wrong place, close to the sink, and just beside Dan who was peeling potatoes. He slipped, one leg went under the sink and

the other under the wagon; Dan fell backwards but held on to the edge of the sink with one hand. Back and back he went, the weight of his head straining his curvature and threatening to choke him. His head and his posterior met near the floor and almost in the same place; for a moment he had the insane thought that he was going to sit on his own head. He managed to call out once, and Ada hearing the strain of strangulation in his voice went in to him as speedily as she could, with due consideration for her own safety. Drawing a box near, she sat down and grabbing him by the hair tugged until the pressure was off his throat, then taking the seat of his trousers she pulled until he was in a normal position. The strain was appalling, and all Dan could do, or would do, was sit about for the rest of the day. I expect it will take a few days for him to regain confidence in his ability to balance himself, and I do not anticipate that he will like doing any work in the scullery for some time. It is cruel to expect him to do anything, or Ada either, but we have no one else after Dad has gone to bed. We have a hope that some day (and before the bad accident happens that will happen because of our slowly weakening state) we may have Albert and his wife living near us on this estate, to relieve us of our trouble, and to be an ever-ready help. If they were not so good to us already it would be an imposition to even expect them to order their lives for our convenience, but because they are so good we have hope that they will solve our difficulty for us. There are many difficulties in the way, but we hope that the Council will give them rooms.

I prepared four chapters for re-writing, but I don't seem to get the chance to begin. I will have to write (as I am writing this) in our living-room with all the talking

and sometimes the wireless going. I am beginning to think that if I ever achieve any degree of concentration I shall have gone through a hard training. When I get to the dramatic parts of my MS. I shall *have* to concentrate and the new writing I put in will be in the lap of the Gods. I have always had to do my letters under the same conditions, so I have hopes.

The doctor came this evening and repeated my medicine for indigestion. He examined Mum, but as the pain has gone, he has only the symptoms to go upon and is inclined to think it was kidney trouble — so Mum was right. He has given her some medicine.

*2nd February.* Read *David and Destiny* (Ian Hay). It took seven years to finish — so the dedication informs England, and I know why. The author felt that his idea had 'died on him', and it was only the advice of others that made him finish it. His name will not suffer much, as there is something in his style that almost animates corpses.

M. came to-day — as Dan will well remember. She had a week-end case with her and Dan forgot where it had been put. Going past Mum's chair his foot caught the case and he fell — right into the door it seemed. Yesterday he damaged his nose; to-day it is decidedly broken. Poor devil. He is bruised all down one side.

M. was very sorry her case had caused the accident, but it could not be helped; he might have fallen knowing it was there and being afraid of touching it with his foot in passing — not being able to see where his feet were going.

Albert and Lil went to Smithfield market to-day to buy

some joints; they came home with two and some chops. We had the chops for supper — the equivalent of our dinner on a Saturday. It is a good saving, as our meat bill is rather large. They will stay the night.

*3rd February.* Heard a lecture by Father Martindale, s.j., on the wireless on how Jesus lived. A theologian once told me that the churches were now little more than warnings of the belief in the consequences of this life — threats to those who may not be inclined to think things out for themselves.

*4th February.* Lady X came to-day. She is extremely nice and the traditional type of Catholic lady. She was glad to find that I intend re-writing some of the MS. as it gave her the chance of helping me by asking me to let her have the typing for a friend of hers to do. I am glad of the offer as it relieves me of the worry wondering how long it would take to type up the story ourselves.

Have asked Lady X to get *Love on the Dole* from her library as I am very interested in it. The play based on the novel is a success and it is about slums and unemployment. *Love on the Dole* was accepted at the time (or about the same time) that the publisher rejected my story.

*5th February.* Lady X sent her chauffeur round with some books and a new copy of *Love on the Dole* which she thought I would like to keep. I read it with mixed feelings. The author has gone over a slum 'depressed area' with a muck-rake and a fine-tooth comb and

has had a good haul in both quarters. I know all that sort of thing, but I would be sick over my own writing if I wrote it.

Alfie has been reading from *A Shropshire Lad* and enjoying himself immensely. He read some out to us. His usual literature is Wild West fiction in 'tuppenny doses' from the cheap library in this road.

Re-wrote some of the MS. but tore it up.

My diary was published over three years ago and yet I still hear news of it — always from an unexpected quarter. To-day Dad told me that he was talking to a taxi-man in Jermyn Street last night (Dad is a night worker) and the taxi-driver said that he had heard that a man on Dad's job had a son who had written a book. Dad was very amused, and after further talk admitted that he was the dustman with the literary son. To his amazement the driver solemnly said, 'Well, all I can say is that God will see that you get your reward in Heaven . . . if there is a God'.

*6th February.* Mrs. F. came. We told her about Dan's fall and she was much concerned, but we are at the laughing stage now, having got over the fright.

Have been re-writing all day and enjoying it. I began by linking up or recasting what I had blue pencilled, but after a page or two I found I was inventing and kept it up to the end of the chapter. In a day or two I shall go over it and know whether it is an improvement or not. At present I'm satisfied.

*7th February.* Mrs. B. came just after midday — a surprise visit. She brought me two tickets for *Love on the Dole* at the Garrick: dress circle and in the best

position. It will be my first show in London. She described how she had even taken the trouble to sit in the seat to make sure it would be the right thing, arranging about an attendant as well. I have promised to write and describe the play to her.

Father H. came in later having heard an account of Dan's fall. He petted Dan a good deal, partly in fun. We described what had happened, Ada told what she did as the rescue party, and Dan, who has now recovered his usual nerve added — 'Do you know, Father, although I don't expect you to believe it, I was sitting on my head when Ada pulled it away.' Father H. made us all grin with his reply, 'Very sensible of you, Dan, to choose a nice soft spot to sit on'.

They are really good pals and get a deal of fun from back-chatting one another. I have seen Hennessy burst out laughing at some of the replies they make; it is a great surprise to him to see Father H. and Dan indulging in a bout of comedy patter.

M. called this evening, rather a surprise as we did not expect her till Sunday, but I thought she might possibly come as she had to bring me the typing paper I asked her to buy for me.

*8th February.* Did some more writing. Have decided to re-write the whole MS. It is very cold again. The nurse came to attend to Mum and Ada and I had to go to the end room as there was a fire there — the only other coal fire in the flat. When I got there I found that Dan had the inside of an arm-chair out, with the chair on its back right in front of the fire, and Basil there watching him and talking about motor cycles. (With occasional

references to 'birds' — not the feathered kind — and spooning. Apparently Basil goes 'spooning' every fortnight — when he makes up for lost time. A most imaginative pow-wow.) I sat at the piano and froze, trying to play to keep warm. Finally I got fed up with it and went and sat out in the passage. Alfie came in (Basil is really Alfie's friend and was waiting for him), and after a little talk he barged down the passage and knocked himself against me and my chair. He called me several kinds of a fool for sitting in the centre of the passage in the dark, and I replied in exactly similar terms, with added advice about using his eyes. I was in a temper, partly through cold. Fortunately I was permitted to enter the living room and I soon got warm again.

Wrote to Mr. D. putting off his visit as I shall be at the matinée.

*9th February.* Could not get Dan out of bed — just when I needed help particularly to get ready for going to the theatre. He was up till nearly five this morning, though I don't know what kept him out of bed — unless it was the intense cold, he always sits close to the fire, so perhaps he thought it more comfortable than undressing in a freezing room — it is a slow process disrobing. We did not get out of bed until nearly one o'clock and Albert came in just afterwards expecting to find me ready. He was annoyed. Dad could see that I was so keen on going that he tried to prepare me for a disappointment — it looked impossible that I could get ready in time as I had not even shaved. Dad said, 'Never mind, son; you do what I've had to do all my life. Make the best of things and put up with it'. I replied, 'Don't you worry, Pop. I'm *going*'.

We got there with minutes to spare by taking a taxi, and sat in the vestibule. The Garrick is small but I liked it, not feeling the least bit nervous.

The play was so true to the circumstances that I never for a moment felt that I was looking at a play — of course it is also my first visit to a theatre. Ronald Gow, who collaborated with the author, deserves considerable credit. I hope he gets it.

The character that moved me most was Mr. Hardcastle, the father; it was perfect. I knew what he was feeling so well, and I was more in sympathy with his part than any other.

I listened to the talk of a couple of women behind me. One was pleased because they had good seats. 'I'm sure it was because I went as soon as I heard about it.' Then, a little later, 'It's so perfectly sweet of you to be so sympathetic'. Then a young lady went past in front, stopping by an old woman two seats away. 'Are you better?' 'No', the old one replied and she began listing her ailments. When the young woman went, I heard, 'She is such a dear; everyone simply loves her. Look at her now'. I took a discreet glance and saw her cooing over a male companion. Then the curtain went up, and I lost interest in the ailments of Society and watched the ills of a nation represented in one family.

*10th February.* Dan's friends came early with a side-car combination and took him out — he was up like a lark, and out of the house before I had my breakfast. They went to a place near Hastings. Dan gave a good description of a mauve mist that they travelled through, and his friends also chimed in.



Albert and Lil turned the place inside out, they were so thorough with the cleaning. Then they measured and cut out material for the divan and cushions for Ada. They have taken the stuff home to make up.

*11th February.* Up early for the visit from Father H. with Holy Communion. Dan got up last. The deaf woman next door came in for a few minutes and helped me to sit up so that I could dress; she looked afraid of hurting me.

When she was talking to Mum I heard her say, 'I said to my boy (who is about five feet six inches high), "Now you can't go to bed dirty, you've got to wash", and he wouldn't do it. "I ain't dirty, Mum", he said. I repeated that he was to wash himself but he wouldn't. So I stripped him and washed him from his head to his heels, and he loved it. He said, "I feel nice and clean, Mummy, now", and so I put him to bed.' The dear boy is as big as both his parents together.

As Father H. went out to make the tea he, apparently absent-mindedly, hung the tea-cloth on the wall, knowing there was no nail there. The comical way he walked past, as though expecting it to stay there, was a perfect reminder of Charlie Chaplin.

Dad came home early from work and the priest had not gone. Dad still had on his working clothes, dirty, ash-covered smock and hat. Father H. grabbed his hand and shook heartily. The priest asked if he had just 'been to a ball'. Then Fr. H. mentioned several names asking Dad if he knew them; he did. It was a little surprising to find that the priest knew so many dustmen, but it transpired that most of them had ceased work (the priest said 'retired')

which sounds much too affluent) and Ada remarked that having finished with this world, the dustmen were apparently being prepared by Father H. for the world to come.

My memory served me well this morning. Last night I had, on going to bed, examined the muddle on my writing table; books, magazines and a pile of old letters, all loose. Glancing over them this morning I noticed a card which I knew had not been there the night before. I picked it up idly and thought it was the card from a friend concerning a previous visit, but I looked at the date and found it was dated for yesterday, and that she was coming to-day.

We began talking and I was told that 'the people make the slums'; that you cannot prevent certain types from creating slums in any environment. This always annoys me extremely. The slums of to-day are the finest that there have ever been in the history of England; awful as they are, they represent the best conditions in slumdom, so even those people who are incorrigible slum creators are on the upward grade. I do not believe for a moment that 'people make slums', but I do know that generation after generation have never lived under any other conditions. The alternative answer that I have had from those who regret slums is, that you cannot blame the present generation for the faults of the earlier generations (the original industrialists who made overcrowding and slums). That, at least, is honest, though not very constructive.

The anti-God campaign in Russia has always rather amused me, and the Catholic press has irritated me with their attitude towards it. My friend began full of horror about it, but I said that there was little to be afraid of; the danger is that some individuals may lose their faith, but,

so far as I understand philosophy it is impossible that an anti-God campaign can succeed or provide any real danger. It is a *theoretical* error in Communism that will ultimately be abandoned. In practice, anything in government that conflicts with or attempts to eliminate the personal, private, instinctive principles of human nature is bound to fail. The Church teaches that the soul *knows* God — it is inherent knowledge — therefore it is nonsense to suggest there is no God, or to be afraid of the suggestion once it is made; and greater nonsense on the part of those who attempt to inculcate the anti-God idea. All they desire to achieve, strictly speaking, is the unified personality, and, from the nation, a single-minded, undivided enthusiasm for temporal and material progress. They desire to eradicate the over-compensation of a promised reward hereafter for trials endured here and now. They want to eliminate the conflict between God and Mammon, the serving of two masters; and, after all, it is only doing openly what Christian countries do with the mockery of lip service to God.

The principle of non-interference in politics with private sentiment is the whole difficulty of democracy. There never has been 'government of the people, by the people, for the people', for the simple reason that there has always been government of the people before the democratic ideal came. The only thing that matters is the *necessity for government*, and that necessity finds theoretical democracy a perfect mask for itself. The people are told that the choice is theirs, but they are led one way or another, or stampeded in the desired direction. The principle of government is that of *leading* the crowd the way it is wanted to go, and the moment a government oversteps the mark and begins to drive it gets into trouble;

that is why Fascism or Nazi-ism will fail in the long run — they are nothing more than political expedients — a fear of something else, which is a fear that the majority of the people of a nation may change their minds when they find that their instinctive principles on the rights of human beings are being violated.

12th February. Have been off colour to-day, so I wrote a few letters which seemed to be always on my mind. I do not think they will be very interesting to those who get them. Could not do any revision, but yesterday I stayed up till 2.30 a.m. enjoying what I was doing; perhaps I have overtired myself.

Miss E. came unexpectedly and talked about the revision, after studying the publisher's letter. She was chiefly curious to see if there was a promise of publication in the letter.

13th February. Reply from Walter Greenwood concerning *Love on the Dole*. He recommends his other book to me — with the usual modesty of an author. Has heard about my book but has not read it. I had told him that I thought there were some things in his book that should have been left out: I think an author may go to extremes in Realism, if he chooses, but a writer has certain responsibilities — he has to *do something* for the people he writes about — as Dickens did for many of his subjects.

14th February. My sister and I did a good deal of revision in a rough way, so as to give me plenty to work on. I shall practically re-write it, but shall enjoy

doing what I can. Ada is to go over what I have already done, and I expect we shall have a verbal fight over it here and there — to the good of the story, I hope. Have done some more writing.

Ian came this evening and has satisfied the priest that he is doing very well in his catechism lessons. I was a little nervous as to how he would face an examination, but he said the priest was pleased. In my inexperience I made my explanations rather too full and difficult, but it has served.

*15th February.* Just lately I have discovered that my right leg has weakened so that I cannot cross it over my left, and it is a great blow; so much of my comfort (to give it a name that other people will recognize or expect) depends on my being able to relieve the strain on my back by crossing my legs and sitting forward. My left ankle weakened some time ago so that it is difficult for me to use the sustaining pedal on the piano. It is not a comfortable situation to be in, noticing the general failure of the muscles that are left — though this is really the failure of the failures.

I did a good deal of writing to-day, for about six hours or so, and enjoyed myself. It was slow going.

Thoroughly tired when I had finished, but it is satisfying tiredness.

Dad said to-day, 'No one would believe there was so much work in writing a book'. So poor old Pop thinks I am working hard.

*16th February.* M. came. Our study circle lasted for nearly three hours this evening, and we covered a range of subjects in the discussion, from Adam

onwards. It went like this. Just as Aristotle and Aquinas argued from a Prime Mover or First Cause to explain the origin of things, so there must have been a First Man. Evolution teaches that, but religion differs from it on the question of the creation of the first soul; that it was the creation of Soul which gave Man his unique distinction. In the Eden story Man falls through Original Sin: Adam and Eve wondered if the Voice in the Garden got its supreme position from something withheld from them and so they ate 'forbidden fruit' — literally, fruit from a certain tree. That appears childish, but the significance is deeper and more universal than it seems, and applies to every branch of human activity. It is a question of keeping faith, of trust and reliance, of the very essence of Love. These abstract or spiritual conditions have an outward form of expression which coincides with the idea or feeling; therefore, true faith, trust, love, have an external existence in human activity. If a man throws his wife downstairs, she would be justified in thinking he no longer loved her; or, if he began throwing the breakfast crockery about, she would begin to have a similar thought. That is exactly what 'eating the apple' means in the Eden story. God put the outward expression of obedience and love into the observance of a simple act — like telling a child not to pluck the roses — and it was the breach of faith in the spiritual condition — mental choice of action that found expression in disobedience.

That brought in the question of free will, and it was suggested that perhaps animals were more perfect in their sphere because, not having souls, they were in complete harmony with their Creator. I replied that free will made Man more perfect because it gave independence (we agreed that Perfection is dynamic not static. Jesus was a

perfect babe, child, man, and a perfect sacrifice). It is this perfection gained from independence that is the unique distinction possessed by Man.

In discussing part of John's gospel we came to the method or principle in the teaching of Jesus, and that is, in the first place, the necessity for the recognition of the primary importance of the inward state in the worship of God. And with that we were back again with the same idea we had discussed in the Garden of Eden story.

Lil came alone and said that Albert was doing a period of night-work, which we all found very amusing as Dad is a permanent night-worker. She scrubbed and dusted, which pleased Mum considerably.

Received *The Sacred Wood* from Mrs. P., with a letter in which she said the style is like mine, but I notice T. S. Eliot in a preface has apologized for being bombastic. Perhaps the similarity is that we are dogmatic, as Ada said of my writing, 'You always write *as if you know* what you are writing about' — which is the sort of remark a sister is usually permitted. I always say that I do not write unless I *do* know, but then that is a masculine trait.

17th February. Did some more writing to-day. I seem not to be aware of anything else, unless it is my own physical discomfort which gets more pronounced every day. My right leg is a trouble and I cannot get a proper rest in my once comfortable chair, and I am extremely irritable. I have at least one good quarrel every day, and am beginning to feel sorry for the people I live with. The writing is a very slow job, though I keep it up for hours.

It was a quiet day, quieter than usual for a Sunday as

we had no one here at all, even Dan's friends deserted him to dress up in their Sunday best and hang about street corners. It is a sure sign that clothes help to provide a feeling of superiority, for to me there seems no point in standing around unless it has a psychological importance in one or two ways. Either they think they are being admired and looked at by friends and acquaintances, or else it is the purely private motive of displaying themselves for possible admiration as a reaction against the depressing influence of grubby working clothes and conditions all the week. The 'Sunday best' restores confidence and that very necessary little human conceit that goes so far towards bringing happiness. I have known unemployed people to dress up in their best purely as a psychological reaction to being out of work.

*18th February.* Had an idea during the night concerning what I had written yesterday, so I rewrote it all and have pleased myself with a possible improvement. My time seems all taken up with writing, going to write, or thinking of what to write next.

I have a nerve pain in my leg from pressure on the chair, and I cannot get off the part; it makes my leg go dead and it is as heavy as lead. It is not amusing to watch one's own slow disintegration.

*19th February.* All I have done to-day, besides having a first class row with Ada (who as critic-in-chief gets insulted if she criticizes too completely — but also gets her own way in the end from her ability to be equally offensive), is to rewrite the first page of the



revision, and fix up what I have done into chapters and subsections. We were up till 2.30 a.m. planning the lay out.

Received a letter from the publisher inquiring about the progress of the revision; have replied that I am re-writing all of it and that it will be very slow work. I do not know what he will think of that, but I expect he will write again with further advice.

Dad is being very good in coming home as soon as he finishes work, to light a fire and give me breakfast, so that it will help me. It certainly makes things run more smoothly here and is an encouragement.

*20th February.* Reply from publisher: 'Do not try to turn your Suite into a Symphony'. It is a very kind remark as it helps me with a warning not to reconstruct too drastically. Writing all day.

Talks with Ada generally end in a heated argument. She read from a newspaper that 'genius' was 'inborn knowledge'. I said it was not, but that it might be the kind of simplicity that avoids error and therefore absorbs knowledge or experience at a faster rate than the ordinary person. It is nonsense to suggest that Yehudi Menuhin was born with a knowledge of violin playing. Ada said that he cried for a violin at the age of two years and on being given a toy one smashed it in a rage. I suggested that all he was born with was a nervous system pre-disposed to enjoy certain sounds, and in that lay his astounding progress, coupled with the simplicity that avoids error more readily than normal. Ada disagreed, and said that Menuhin's sister was now a piano genius, and I claimed that fact as evidence for my argument, she,

for hers. What is simpler than to accept the possibility of the Menuhins being born with a nervous disposition to the vibrations we call music? After all, the only conditions that really exist are the sound vibrations and the nervous response. By reversing the argument we get the person who cannot bear music and hates it in every form; that is a nervous reaction. Why not call those people music-hate geniuses? We have absorbed other, and probably fanciful, ideas on what Genius is. Some people cannot be taught anything properly and the obvious reason is that they make errors, repeat them and develop some degree of habit formation in which the errors have some restricting effect. The errors are the impulses that affect their nervous disposition, that is why people are all so different, and why they cannot be equal in any degree at all.

I leave out of the argument the 'Divine Spark', for that in ordinary language is the use of a talent, the drive of application that accompanies the tendency along certain lines.

*21st February.* Father H. brought in two sketches of his father's paintings 'Betrayed by the Moon' and the sequel. They were in black and white and Father H. said they were not successful. He criticized the paintings to find out what was faulty with them, in so far as one can apply the word to the work of such an artist. Dan pointed out that the searchlight beam was weaker than the moonlight. There is a very clear impression of speed and movement and the originals must look good. I had my own idea why the pictures may not have been successful. Painting must always have an ethical quality somewhere in it—appreciation of Beauty, Truth,

Goodness, or whatever you wish to call it — which means there is always some creative, constructive effort expressed. The paintings were of a torpedo boat attacking a destroyer, and doing it successfully. What is termed strategy in war, one cannot help feeling is treacherous treatment — fire a torpedo, then scoot like hell! At best the idea can only be praised as an action picture.

*22nd February.* Tried to play the piano but found I could not cross my legs nor could I reach the pedal when Dennis (a friend of Dan's) crossed my legs for me. That is two handicaps, not one. It shows my hip muscles have weakened and taken the power of movement to some degree from both legs.

My playing sounds weak without the sustaining pedal. Dennis sang 'I'll See You Again' and reached F without strain or knowing he has a voice. A soft tenor. Told me I can accompany well — after I had helped him with 'Smilin' Through'.

*23rd February.* There is something special about this day that I shall always remember — I happened. Had a letter of greeting from the girl Ada made friends with at Lourdes; she is very ill with tuberculosis and is not expected to live much longer, but has a wonderful spirit. Says she picks up my diary to read when she is in need of 'uplift'. Her friend has sent us a home-made birthday cake — it being Mum's birthday on the 25th.

M. brought a present for me — tinned tongue — which we all thought most appropriate! We had an impromptu party, ham, tongue, tea and cake.

Our Bible group talk lasted three hours — which shows how penetrating is M.'s choice of present — of course, I was the cause of the long talk. I think we all enjoyed it.

*24th February.* Felt ill all day, did nothing at all except swallow medicine — which I enjoyed.

*25th February.* Mum's birthday, she is 55. Mrs. Paddie came to see us, chiefly to get her hair trimmed by Ada. Learning Mum's age she asked, 'I don't look 54, do I?' Mum's laugh and remarks did her good, I should think — if she heard them!

Dan was supposed to have a visitor from some occupational centre for disabled people, but she did not come. Instead I got a letter telling me the visitor wanted to come on the 27th and would I write *at once*. I wrote. The idea is to find some work that will occupy his time — his spare time, of course. When he is not in the kitchen, I suppose, or when he is too tired to do anything but try to rest.

*26th February.* Arthur came in to-day and talked about —corks! He and a friend are going into the champagne cork business as a side line. It appears that certain corks have a price on their heads if returned to the proper quarter, so he is circularizing northern hotels for corks. He explained that waiters who know their job recommend wines with the best paying corks! So now we know. He had a job at Grosvenor House and said that recently Mills's Circus held a ball there and had a circus in the ball room — including an elephant that followed the

waiters when it smelt food. It was great fun for everyone. The elephant helped itself to chickens and what-not, while the waiters tried to dodge the too intrusive trunk.

Had a letter from B.S., who has passed a troublesome exam. Apparently some psychological advice I gave was beneficial, as she has failed three times before with this exam; for she said she went in this time with a frightful superiority complex! As my advice was amusing as well as to the point I hope it did help.

*27th February.* The visitor came from the occupational centre and showed us some amazing textile work done by disabled people. Dan is not capable of doing any of the loom work, but offered to paint some of their small carpentry for them. He also showed them a special mat he makes — or used to make, as his hands have weakened too much to do it now.

We were talking about doing as one likes earlier in the day, and Dad said that it was the only privilege he had left in his own home. Everyone laughed as I replied, to Dad's astonishment, 'That's not a privilege, it's a delusion!'

*28th February.* I go all philosophical at times. I lay in bed this afternoon thinking of how much more satisfying an abstraction can be and how superior to the real entity. In an abstraction like the idea of God, for instance, we attribute all the ideal qualities, and even have a Book to show how we have gradually understood the Ideal more and more, only we absolve ourselves by calling the gradual process Divine Revelation — as though

God slowly taught us: the ultimate condition is, of course, that the abstractions become the Entity — and the Word is Made Flesh. My preoccupation was entirely psychological as I was thinking of people who live by that process of abstraction and, surprisingly, I find it a universal trait, or failing. At first glance it does not appear to be a national characteristic, but we here in England are full of it. We have an abstraction called the British Character, another the 'Empah', and another our system of Government. All these are abstractions: the best characters have certain similarities, but it is our worst characteristics that made our Empire — exploitation in the name of bringing civilization. Clive is a typical example and there are others. People to-day are loyal, not by what they know, but by what they believe, want to believe, or are led to believe. No sane person could wave a flag in this land fit for heroes if they knew all about the distress in the country. I mean loyal to a system, of course. What we call Capitalism is an abstraction that permits certain sections of the public to live comfortably. International Capitalism uses raw materials of different kinds for the benefit of the Internationalists of each country. The raw materials are: 1. Mineral and vegetable resources. 2. Human labour. 3. Other people's brains. 4. Other people's money. Numbers three and four are also manipulated by threats supposed to come from number two. Lust for power or profit is the driving force, and the whole human race is fooled, divided against itself, and suffers for it. The poor suffer from want, the rich from fear of one kind or another; the brainy suffer from exploitation — if they are honest. And to clinch the whole point so far as these thoughts on abstractions go — this whole argument is abstract.

*1st March.* Had the worst row ever with Ada and it has finished our critical collaboration. I do not quite know how these arguments arise but they always end with the family, Mum, Dan and Ada on one side and myself on the other, which means that, being in the minority, I must be wrong; and always when we discuss the text of my MS. Ada adopts a permanently superior attitude as critic (which she may be entitled to take) and pontificates accordingly. What decided me to finish the collaboration is that Ada said that she only helped me with the criticism because she was sorry for me. I will not stand that kind of talk from anyone. Sorry! I am not sorry for myself! I have no illusions, that I am aware of, concerning myself, but I do want to write, and I have chosen to rewrite this MS. because I believe it is the best way to learn. Where does the necessity for 'sorrow' come in?

*2nd March.* When M. came to-day Dan told her about our 'glorious row' of yesterday — as soon as he sat down in the same room. Mum joined in, and after a while, I had my say in the matter. It was just the fool's trick I would expect of Dan, and M. said that people in the same family are almost always constitutionally incapable of criticizing without causing discord.

One cause of my annoyance concerning the criticism of the MS. is that I have gone thirty pages in advance of the part we had blue pencilled, and I thought Ada would object if I did too much, and possibly be the cause of my having to rewrite the rewritten part. So I waited for Ada to finish her reading so that we could go over the MS. together. She read all day Thursday and half the evening

yesterday (Friday). When she at last asked for the part I had rewritten I saw that, even if we put in the rest of the night blue-pencilling, I would not get a chance to begin writing again until Monday next as we have people here on Saturday, and Aunt is coming on Sunday. That makes an average of one day for work out of five. It is not my idea of being helped.

I nearly fell off my chair going to bed. My right leg is so heavy now that I can scarcely lift it as I move, and in struggling along my hand slipped; only good fortune saved me from a nasty knock.

*3rd March.* Dan was up with the lark and out of the house before ten a.m. for a ride in his friend's combination. There *are* some things that will get him out of bed! When he came back his outdoor clothes were scattered all round the room, cap, coat, macintosh, pull-over, gloves, scarf — and left there.

When Aunt came she picked up the clothes and put them in one place. She brought us a number of photographs of her youngest daughter who is in a stage troupe on the Continent at present. Some of the photos — those taken abroad — had a French flavour. One picture showed the stage act and three of the girls were in almost a natural state. Another photo was of four girls sitting behind a balcony wearing white fox furs — and nothing else.

In Italy one old man proposed to aunt's girl. He said that it was the first time he had thought of marriage. 'The Old Fool', commented cousin in rejecting the offer. I am glad she was not a young fool.

We had news of all the married cousins in that family. Everyone is getting on well.



Then we had some scandal. Young So-and-so, who is seventeen, had got a girl 'into trouble', and his sister had suddenly left home, sent a telegram saying she was married, and then said she had been married for four months. 'Taking after their father' was the verdict. 'The other day I met him and asked after his wife by name. "How's Kate?" I asked, and the dirty old —— replied, "Which one?"'

We made a very interesting discovery concerning a street bookmaker. One day this 'sportsman' had occasion to offer money to a too insistent policeman who was interfering with business. The money was accepted and some days later the constable came round again, this time with a mate. Some more money changed hands. Result was two months for the hard-working bookie! It just shows how, after more than twenty years in the business on the same lines, at the same spot, a bookmaker may make a mistake; but who would expect that to happen after so long? But perhaps I am a little unjust, for certainly the times are changing. The ring of street bookmakers has been broken up because expenses became too heavy as the men in blue (or disguised as painters, milkmen or women) made a haul. In the old days they were generally warned when it would happen, and a convenient 'dummy' was disposed of at less expense.

*4th March.* The occupational industry lady came in for a few minutes bringing Dan some paint and the objects needing repainting. She told us a story of her daughter (aged four and a half) who has just begun at school. She came home and announced that she had been told the story of the silliest boy who ever lived. His

name was Joseph and his brothers tied his hands and feet with string and sent him into Egypt. His mother called out 'Where is my beloved?' and there was the silly thing being a *parcel* all the time!

We also told one of a boy who enjoyed going to a funeral and invented a game of the same name. He got a box and his Teddy Bear, dug a hole in the garden, and concluded with 'In the name of the Father and of the Son into the hole he goes!'

*5th March.* Did a good day's work and wrote for about eight hours, with rests.

*7th March.* Mum is not well, feels sick and is hoarse. She is probably going to have a bronchial attack. I am off colour. Did nothing at all but lie about feeling fed-up.

Albert and Lil came over for a while.

*8th March.* Mum is not at all well. The nurse came and thought she is rather bad. It is bronchitis and heart strain. She took a letter to the doctor and he sent some medicine and is coming in to-morrow.

I am all right again. Did some writing, a section of a chapter which pleases me. I feel quite bucked to be able to get on with it.

Wrote a few letters that had been hanging around for days unanswered.

*9th March.* M. came and she brought a brown loaf, a box of dates and a tin of prawns. It reminded me of a phrase in the MS. 'What funny fancies some gels

do 'ave!' I quoted it and Ada laughed. The story is so real to us that when we say anything like that, it reminds us of not only who says it, but the circumstance under which it is said. That is not a bad test of character and dialogue.

Mum is really ill. The doctor has ordered whisky between medicine times to keep the heart strong. Apparently the sick feeling is strain on the heart. Mum is taking soda and milk, or egg and milk. She has hardly eaten anything for two days. She takes two pills, digitalis and luminol.

M. has promised to come again to-morrow if possible. I guess she thinks we shall be needing some help.

Dan stayed up all night to attend to Mum. He can turn up trumps when required. He went to bed at 8 a.m. and was up again at 2 p.m. To-night is Dad's night off, so he will be night nurse!

*10th March.* Nothing but worry over Mum. She is bad, and unable to sleep at all. She cannot lie down, and has to sit in the same position day and night. M. came in for a while. Dan is to stay up all night.

*11th March.* Mrs. F. came as she heard from Father H. that Mum was ill. She is very nice and obviously knows a good deal about nursing and has suggested many things. She went out and bought a bottle of Allenbury's Beef Juice and gave directions when to give it.

I tried to do a little writing, but it is somehow grotesque to be playing about with fiction with such a real danger here. I did very little, and for a time it did keep me occupied.

Received a parcel of primrose roots and moss from Mrs. C. The parcel had a label on it from the Post Office saying that it had been damaged in transit and that the authorities had kindly secured the contents. I must admit I was quite touched by the kindness, but there is a cynical streak which suggests that, as the parcel came from Ireland, the Post Office hastily secured the parcel in case a lot of Irish Sweepstake receipts should fall out and embarrass them, poor dears.

*12th March.* Mrs. F. came again to-day and a friend brought a dainty piece of whiting, creamed, with a spotted parsley spine. It looked most appetizing. There were also three little jellies. Mrs. F. thought the fish would be too heavy and so she only gave some jelly. Later Mum ate the fish, enjoyed it and suffered the consequent palpitation. As she does not get to sleep, I suppose a little risk in taking nourishment is permissible.

Dan is very good indeed, and is an excellent night nurse. I have tried to write a little more and it is useful as I feel I am doing something. I have one office I can fill; having been ill so often myself with many things (pleurisy, bronchitis, pneumonia with condensation of one lung base), I have some way of telling how Mum is. I could not understand Mum's faintness, but as the doctor said that is heart strain, we can only give her the pills and the whisky.

*13th March.* Miss E. came, having had a 'phone message from someone that Mum was ill. She brought some grapes and plums, and also offered to do the

washing up. She was interested in my writing. As she did the original criticism, she went over what I was doing. She read a little and in comparing the MS. with what I had just finished was very encouraging.

Miss A. came, also having heard of the illness, and has promised to send in some Brand's Essence. She is leaving town and I am to keep her informed.

Mum is getting hardly any sleep and Dan looks very much the worse for wear. We have the district nurse in each day. The doctor does not say anything about Mum's condition. I think she must have a temperature.

M. came in again; this is her only other free evening this week. Dan feels that his prestige is enhanced by his devotion to duty, and Mum feels as important as Miss Smith of Orphan Island — as we say — though she compares herself with the Queen (she does not say which one — though, as she complains of the cold, I have an idea she may be thinking of Queen Anne — but perhaps the cold is in a different quarter!)

Father H. has passed my boy in his catechism examination and I am to have another — a backward youth. I said (as Father H. apologized for the boy), that I liked them slow — as I am a little slow myself.

*14th March.* Mum slept last night for about three hours.

We are feeding her on patent foods as she cannot eat anything else. The whisky makes her hot and she doesn't like it. Someone came to tell me that the backward youth has been forbidden by his father to take private instruction.

The 'deaf old dear' from next door called in to see how Mum is, and on seeing me scribbling away thought I

wrote nicely. Then she said, 'It keeps him occupied, don't it?' The one remark that drives me frantic. I do get cross when people say that, but I suppose it is true, as I say that it will keep me busy for another eight weeks! That is the same remark in different words; the difference is that I think I am attempting something worth while.

*15th March.* Dan has had as much as he can stand of night nursing, and he is not able to sleep in the daytime; he looks worn out, but is the only one who can do it. Mum is a little better, but still cannot lie down. She has been sitting in the same position for a week.

Have just realized that I had a letter from a lady from Denmark (who proposes to get my diary translated into Danish). She wanted to come and see me this week as she will be in London, but I've forgotten all about it. I do not remember her Danish address. I wonder what she will think? I cannot bear people myself who ignore correspondence.

Did a little more writing — to occupy my time!

*16th March.* Mum is a little better and the doctor seems more satisfied with her. He has recommended some chicken. When I got up to-day I had a look at Dan; his eyes are quite dull. I made him have a cup of hot milk and go straight to bed. He did as he was told!

M. came. She brought some chicken pasties and some biscuits, to save us having to cook.

A man called at the door and said he was from 'The Church'. We told him we were Catholics and he seemed to be aware of it. He said he was organizing or helping to organize work amongst unemployed Catholics. He was

selling framed pictures of sacred subjects and though I noticed he told a lie or two we bought a picture. They were not badly done for the price. I hope he is genuine, but I am doubtful as he was very hazy about the organization side of his enterprise!

M. is reading my new effort and making very helpful criticisms. When we alter any of it now, we apply some chemical from a bottle and watch the ink disappear, as it is easier than erasing.

Lil and Albert came over and are coming back tomorrow to do some housework.

Hennessy has not turned up for some weeks for the study circle. I suppose he has plenty of other things to think of, and does a good deal of serving at Church. He cannot do what he wants to do until the better weather comes, then he can take one of us out on fine evenings.

*17th March.* Mum slept from 7 a.m. till 11 a.m. after a restless night and seems better for the sleep. She is a little more like her usual self and is doing more talking!

About midday we had two unexpected visitors. I was in bed, and as it takes me so long to dress I did not attempt to see them. They only stayed a few minutes.

Mum had a small piece of chicken, one tiny potato and one sprout for dinner to-day.

Albert and Lil came over late and Albert did duty as night nurse. Mum is glad to give Dan a change.

*18th March.* The nurse comes in each morning to attend to Mum, but I am generally asleep. To-day I heard her. She is young and rather friendly. Generally

Dan makes her welcome with his usual cheeky banter, so she was surprised to find Albert here when she came.

Albert did some housework until midday. Then Dan came on duty. A little later we had another visitor who knows a friend in Sheffield. Heard the usual 'People make Slums' argument, the coals in the bath example plus a new one — lettuces grown in the bath! I've never met the incorrigible type, for two reasons: 1. They would not be permitted on a good estate unless they were dependable wage earners; and 2. If they are incorrigible they cannot be forced to move. I don't believe there is a married person under fifty who does not respond to the hope of a clean home in good surroundings.

Received a letter from a reader of *A Tenement in Soho* who wants to call and talk on psychology and the Bible. I like these letters and they come from all sorts of places all round the globe.

Did a little writing.

Mrs. F. brought a friend with her to-day — someone who had nursed. She was expected to sit and talk to Mum but showed some disinclination to be near the bed! We talked about the armaments scare and I went pro-German *pro tem*.

Later on I had the same kind of talk with another caller, but she did agree with the principle that if you give a nation a good beating you cannot expect them to be friendly afterwards — especially if you are peacefully cutting economic throats all the time. Also she said that wars make wars. My belief is that wars are part of the competitive system, which is a system based on two failures in human nature — Greed and Violence. Neither can be controlled in a competitive system. The ramifications of Capitalism are world wide and ages old — and



it is its age that has brought its power, for, once universally attained, Capitalism enforces itself by its twin vices, and when applied from the top they are a formidable combination. The reverse process of applying Communism from below is shown as an evil, and because it is just as materialistic as Capitalism it uses the same twin elements. There is not a pin to choose between either theory, for there is no such thing as a universal problem in human affairs. There is only one individual problem multiplied as many millions of times as there are human beings.

The doctor says Mum is much better but that she must take the heart pills until it beats more slowly. He thinks she should try and eat more now, which is a good sign.

Some time ago I asked the doctor about a discovery, a marvellous drug treatment for a grave form of paralysis (myasthenia gravis), and I wondered if a modification of the treatment would help us. The doctor thought it would not, but to-day he said I could write to a Dr. Walker as a matter of interest.

*19th March.* Another letter from a reader of my diary, this time from New Zealand, a long friendly effort because the writer 'knows us all so well'. Every letter contains that phrase — at least, those who have not thought the diary to be a sham one. Just lately I had a letter from a nephew of a friend, and though he read the diary a long time ago, it was not until he was actually staying at the same hotel as John Oxenham that he realized the diary was true! And now, nine months afterwards, he has written to me.

Some more writing. Yesterday I found that a new

chapter I had begun would not 'come alive' — it was just the first paragraph or so, but to-day everything was as smooth as possible. I suppose I solved the problem in my unconscious mind while asleep, as some people would say.

Dan still doing night duty. He looks the worse for wear. He is very plucky, though, and everyone appreciates his great effort.

*20th March.* Mum is improving, but she is still sitting in the same position; this is probably the twelfth day she has been in that state, with very little sleep into the bargain. I think that the kindness of those friends who have brought her nice things to eat and nourishing essences has helped her to keep up her strength.

I am very interested in my writing, and as Dan looks so weary (partly through not being able to sleep in the daytime) I have decided to stay up all night with him for the sake of company. He says that from five to seven a.m. is the worst time for him — as I can well understand — he must be nearly dead by that time.

*21st March.* I stayed up and wrote until 3.30 a.m. It seems very strange to me that I can peg away so at my MS., but if it did not seem worth it I should be very worried. When Dad came in for his rest time and supper (at 4 a.m.) I had a cup of tea. It seemed quite natural to be having a drink at that time, though the sight of Mum sitting up on her settee trying to sleep — with that part of the room shaded — was out of the ordinary. Time does not really affect me. I could live

by night during the winter months, for all the daylight I see.

Before I went to bed I had a look at the newspaper from where it lay on the doormat. It was amusing to be going to bed after the paper had been delivered, and I had a rather upside down feeling. The news was that France had complained to the League about conscription in Germany. All this talk irritates me; they are only 'rubbing it in'. They know quite well that the League cannot do anything about it, but it would be a hood-winking gesture if the League would reprimand Germany. There is a principle that applies to this kind of action: always divert the attention to something else when you want to do something peculiar and, from some people's point of view, undesirable. In this instance it is blaming Germany for the very thing everyone else wants to do and will do now they have the excuse. Russia is still on the other side of Germany, and though Communist, is a military nation. I am beginning to think that the salvation of Europe depends on Germany going Communist. It was the fear of that which gave Hitler his chance.

*22nd March.* This afternoon we had a visit from Lady X who was worried to see Mum so ill. She also thought Ada looked run down. Lady X said that Mum needed some port and brandy, and that she had the very thing in her cupboard. She would send the chauffeur back with them. At the same time it was suggested that Ada should go to the hospital at Eastcote for a rest. Lady X would ring up her sister and let us know very soon. Ada does her share of nursing during the day.

We talked about books and writing, and Lady X is going to send me some more of Arnold Bennett's books as I find them very much to my liking. It is very efficient work but it misses the mark — it lacks the inspirational fire that one somehow expects from one in his position. The technique is there, but despite the immense sympathy it all seems too calculated, and whatever is most effective is so shyly tucked away that it is not always seen on the first reading. I think that what Bennett needed was a philosophy, so that he could go hammer and tongs at things, slashing wherever he thought fit. He did not bite hard enough. Despite his show of confidence his shyness held him in a grip that disguised itself in his detachment. His writing was too broad; it spread itself in an enveloping sympathy that eventually lost direction. Or, he should have been as artful as Galsworthy, who wrote about the upper middle class and made them believe they were the blue blood of old England. This may have been an unconscious attitude, but it was nevertheless effective, and Galsworthy had the most limited knowledge of the working classes I have ever seen in books.

Later on Lady X's chauffeur returned with a bottle of brandy, another of port, also some ham and eggs. And the Bennett books, of course. It is the most generous act I have ever known from an incidental visit.

*23rd March.* A quiet day. M. came as usual and we did some more criticism of the MS. Afterwards we had the Bible study but I had not written my notes. I stayed up last night writing, and was too tired to do them on Saturday morning.

*24th March.* Just a Sunday. I wrote a little before dinner and found a good beginning for a chapter that had worried me. It is very interesting to notice other people's reactions to the different parts. Bits that I had thought effective at one time, but have now relegated to second place, often amuse others.

*25th March.* Miss E. came. She told us of a French girl we often hear about who has received a vocation and left home and everything to go into a convent. Seeing that this girl did a good deal of the parish work, was the idol of her parents and grandmother, and has distressed everyone by her action, it makes one realize how inconvenient a vocation can be. If she had waited another two years, her brother and sister would be home to take her place — but no, the vocation must have its way. I hope someone has the good sense to tell the Mother Superior how the parish suffers because of that vocation — she would not let a thing like that happen knowingly; and anyway, a vocation is better for having overcome a few obstacles. I would suspect anything so easily fulfilled as a vocation in those circumstances.

*26th March.* Stayed up all night writing. When Dad came in at 4 a.m. for his supper I had some tea with him. After that hour, when the daylight begins to come, and milkmen rattle round the estate on bicycles, one always seems to notice how cold it is.

Mrs. B. called this afternoon before I had risen from bed. As soon as I got into my chair I was given a chop and tomatoes, while Mrs. B. prepared the table for tea.

I soon realized that Mum had taken charge of affairs again!

Mrs. B., who always brings flowers, brought a large bunch of red tulips and some 'pussy-willow'. It made a good show in two vases.

The doctor came in and was pleased with Mum's appearance. We talked of arthritis, osteopathy (the doctor was sympathetic), and he said that only experienced practitioners should be encouraged to take it up — as young doctors would be just as likely to make an error as an ordinary osteopath. We also talked of medical fads, which are as obscure and varied as they are peculiar. I know of one for a very good reason. One day I received a book sent from a clergyman acquaintance, which recommended the treatment for everything known and unknown. Dan made an appointment with the manipulator (who has a doctor as clerk) and asked me what he should say to the man who was to experiment on him. I said, 'Tell the man your father is a dustman', a heavy cynicism intended to keep Dan from thinking that the man could do him any good. A free treatment was promised for the first time, but surely enough, when Dan asked for the free treatment the therapist lost his temper. He doubtless thought that I would go there and hand over some of my royalties from the *Tenement* just to be tickled. I am not ticklish! On comparing handwriting we found that the clerk had sent the book to the clergyman!

27th March. Ada was up late last night preparing for her change of abode, and she was busy sewing things all this morning. Albert remained as night nurse as Dan has endured about as much as he is capable

of. I stayed up to do some more writing; it does not matter whether I go to bed at midnight or 6 a.m., and so it does not matter when I choose to write.

Albert curled himself up in a chair and went to sleep wrapped in a rug. I got on with my writing, but as Mum needed no attention — the pills are doping her — I went to bed when Dad came in for supper.

The chauffeur brought the car to the door and Albert carried Ada out. I saw her settle into the car — I was just getting up — and she looked quite comfortable.

Lady Z sent us a bundle of cherry tree cuttings. She does so every year, to remind us of the coming of spring. The first time she also sent a large pottery vase to hold the branches. When M. came this morning she arranged the blossoms in the vase. When it comes out properly it is a wonderful sight, like snow-covered branches, and it lasts a surprising time. It is one of our indoor memories to have that blossom from year to year.

We did some more criticism for a while. It was a surprise for M. to find Ada gone so suddenly. It was an amusing scene as she and I read the MS. sitting at the table. Mum had gone to sleep and we were reading like two dumb creatures. Mum began to snore and M. moved her chair; it grated on the floor and I said, 'Be careful, you'll wake the chaperon!'

*28th March.* Dan is developing a cold and it will mean a chest attack, especially as he is so run-down. As Ada is away it means that he must serve the food. I expect I shall be next on the list. The place is quiet without Ada, but that does not mean she makes all the noise. She has a machine-gun action, and there are

always targets where there are talkative people. One thing amused us about Ada's absence; Mum has been ill but Ada has gone away to recuperate. It is rather like the custom of the South Pacific tribe in which the husband goes to bed for a fortnight every time the wife has a baby!

Mum is much better, but so weak that she cannot lift a cup with both hands.

*29th March.* The doctor came and is intending to continue the sleep-inducing pills. They certainly make Mum sleep. She gets twelve hours easily. The doctor talked about the Grand National — we had just tuned-in to listen to it, but we were about ten minutes too early; I thought he would have stayed to listen to the commentary but it would have lasted at least twenty minutes.

He examined my throat and Dan's, and we are to have a gargle and chest medicine.

*30th March.* I'm afraid I am going to have an attack of chest trouble. To-day I feel very chilled; sudden cold round my chest and back that I am all too familiar with from experience. The cold is in my head as well. Dan seems to be not much better off.

When M. came she was about to apologize for calling with a slight cold, but she had no need to do so as I said I was not feeling well enough to write to her and put off her visit.

Dan went out with his friend for a run in the side-car. I don't think it is wise.

During the afternoon I had two drinks of brandy.



I was a little afraid of the chill. M. read some of the MS. I had re-written. When she had gone I lay back in my arm-chair, and with my legs upon another chair and covered with a rug, I felt easier.

*31st March.* Spent most of the day (Sunday) in bed.

Dan went out again with his friend and several other chaps with motor cycles. They went to Bognor. Out by Putney one of the boys was caught in a police trap — a measured furlong after turning a corner. He will be fined a week's wage, and more if he says anything else but 'Guilty. Sorry!' This speed limit is a very belated attempt to cure what should never have been permitted to happen; there has been so little State interference with the motor production business that it needed casualties amounting to those in a minor war before there was any State control.

I had no breakfast, but Dad brought me my dinner in bed. When I got up it was evening and I had not had a drink all day. Just as I was dressed someone pulled the key on its string through the letter-box, it was Lil, and we soon had a cup of tea.

Albert came along later when he had finished work. It was his first day at a new job. He told me of a couple of funny incidents that happened in the Soho racing world on Grand National day. One bookmaker has a regular pitch near some old stables in a cul-de-sac. 'National' day is one of the busy days for a bookmaker, and as a natural consequence there is danger of 'obstruction', which is an offence on the highways of England (even in back alleys), and so the policemen are correspondingly more active — they might even guess that

people back horses on those days known as Big Race Days. On such occasions, in the racing world of Soho, there are many scares from painters in dirty overalls (but with large official feet and often regulation trousers), and sudden scampers and hurried closings of doors. Or perhaps it might be a butcher, or a hefty six feet tall wench, that causes the bother. I do not know which disguise was successful this time, but first the 'look-out man' was 'pinched' and then the bookie. It was then the painter-butcher-wench police had a brilliant idea — they were probably inspired by the sight of some empty stables. The bookie and his band of consorts were put in a stable and the door shut, and possibly one of the 'wenches' stood up bravely, this time disguised as a street bookmaker. As each punter (wretched gambler in C.I.D. language) handed in his betting paper he was grabbed and put in the stable — appropriate irony of circumstance.

There is a good stretch of straight approach before the cul-de-sac opens out for the stable-yard, and down the straight cantered an enthusiastic Italian. As he passed people going in the same direction (other 'runners' as it were) he grinned, calling out, 'I gotta da right one to-day-a!' and he waved his paper triumphantly. Coming to the bookie, he waved his paper again and said, 'I gotta da right one to-day-a!' The sham bookie replied, 'An' now I gotta you, eh? In you go!'

Then there was the cool cockney. He strolled down the straight, hands in pockets, no signs of a paper. The bookie said, 'Where's your bet?' The cool one replied, 'Blimey, arf a mo', I ain't wrote it out yet!' The impatient bookie waited while a paper was pencilled upon. "'Ere y'are, Patience', the cockney said. 'And

here *you* are', the bookie said, putting him in among the others.

When the stables were full their contents were taken away (in plain vans, I hope).

In another place, a small side street, a man in blue was quite openly objectionable. He walked down the street and in bobbed the bookie. On this occasion it had been found expedient for the 'young guv'nor' to act as 'look-out-man' and the usual tout was promoted to the high office of bet-acceptor, to lessen a possible fine if caught. The young guv'nor after a while called out giving the 'all clear', which in this instance was, 'It's all right, Bill'. Bill opened the door to resume business and nearly fell through the floor as a policeman stepped from a nearby doorway and said, 'It's all right, Bill, come on!' The erstwhile bookie looked very grieved. 'You're a fine one', he said to the policeman, 'there's me, been careful not to get pinched all the month, so as I could get me beer money bonus, and you go and do this! Couldn't you 'ave waited till next week?' (This bonus is a new idea. Apparently the policemen are more troublesome — or just a cleverer generation — and the bookmaker offers a bonus to the men who do not get 'pinched' or 'knocked off'.)

Albert said that Mr. Paddie told him of the following incident. In the police station, Bill, the promoted tout, was amongst a crowd collected from other pitches. It seemed to be a day on which his eyes were scarcely reliable, for he saw a man amongst the crowd whose presence there amazed him. He went over to the man and said, 'Don't tell me they've pinched *you* for betting!' The man replied, 'I don't know what I'm here for. They just took me, and if I'm not out of here soon I'll be late

for work'. Bill went to see the station sergeant about it, probably with some success!

*1st April.* Had no sleep all night. My brain seemed to be perversely active and thought after thought came concerning my story. The first was a new incident for where I had left off some days ago. I do not know whether to use it or not. Eventually I was just feeling drowsy when Alfie brought me my post for that morning. It woke me up again completely. I stayed in bed until I had slept for some hours.

When up I felt rather ill. The chill has gone but my lungs are aching. As I only have to sit about all day I think it is just as well to be out of bed as in — unless tired. Lil came along again and helped Dan. She brought me a brandy in hot milk when I went to bed. It is the filthiest taste I know, and a way to spoil good milk. A whole cupful of horrid taste — because it is good for one.

A different nurse came this morning and washed Mum without heating the water enough. The weather is rather cold and Mum was uncovered a good deal. Such treatment is enough to bring on another bronchial attack. Since we left Soho our experiences with nurses have been not too good.

Alfie has his girl friend in every night, they sit in an armchair each (on most occasions) and talk; I cannot imagine what it is that people can talk about so much. To-night, as it was rather cold, they had a big fire and the chimney caught alight. Alfie put the fire out and as soot continued to fall they did not light it again. Later he told me that he and his girl sat in one chair with a

rug round them. I cannot repeat Mum's remarks. It happens that they always get the room to themselves.

I am thinking of following suit; I have asked them, in front of Alfie, if I can have 'a bird' in the front room, but they seem to think it a joke!

*2nd April.* Received a letter from the publisher making an appointment for Friday next for a talk over the book. I am very sorry but will not be able to see him as I am all blowy and bronchial, and one cannot talk in that condition, apart from the visitor's point of view. It would have been most interesting to have his personal views.

I lent M. *My Antonia* by Willa Cather last week, and to-day I had a letter in which she gives an example, from the book, of description, and suggests that I fall short in this respect. She wrote, 'How about similes — like this: "Peter . . . short, bow-legged and *as fat as butter*. . . . His hair and beard were as thick and curly *as carded wool*. His rosy face, his snub-nose, set in this fleece, was *like a melon among its leaves*!"' I am afraid that my ideas are most disrespectful. The only real bit of description is 'set in this fleece', and few would notice that. I replied that 'as fat as butter' was colloquial and slightly rancid! No writer who was keen to do the best would write a passage like that. It is bad to use similes in that fashion, the fewer the better — dash — I nearly wrote 'butter'. There is a kind of writing in which one can 'lay it on thickly', and that is the kind that successful writers churn out to meet the publishers' seasons, and that means they have an eye on a special public. I am in favour of it to a certain extent, but I do not want such writings as copy-

books. A simple writer will do better than 'fat as butter' quite naturally, and, supposing the reader happens to be suffering from an attack of indigestion? I can see unsuspected reasons for not doing such things in description!

Further in her letter M. did hit on a real weakness of mine — a deficiency of 'physical outline'. I know I do not do that fully, and her remarks are a very sound contribution.

I had no sleep again last night, but I stayed in bed until I did get some. Heard Dan coughing all night, and Dad helping Mum when he came home for supper, giving her a drink and making her comfortable. Dad came in to me and offered to get me some hot milk. I did not want any.

*3rd April.* To-day we had a most interesting letter from Ada. She likes the hospital and is being well cared for; so far she has stayed in bed all the time but is pushed into the open air if it is sunny. She has been examined by a Mr. Q who, after the overhaul, said: 'It's not ——. Get a diagnosis from Mr. ———'. As he was going away (he only stayed five minutes) Ada heard him mention the treatment for myasthenia gravis — that wonderful new cure that made such a press sensation in March. He said, 'It is absolutely miraculous'.

A little while ago I spoke to our doctor about that treatment and he said (after a lapse of a fortnight) that I could write to Dr. Walker about it. I have not done so yet because there is little hurry if it is a useful treatment, and none at all if it is useless.

I have a high opinion of Mr. Q — just because he is

apparently rejecting the label already affixed to us by the medical profession. It is, I suspect, the only label in the textbooks that 'approximates to our symptoms — and it needs a specialist to stick it on. I asked our doctor why it was that our pelvic girdle weakness was always left out in labelling us with 'Facio-Scapulo-Humeral Myopathy', that is — face, shoulder-blade and top of the arm weakness — but we also have back and legs completely weakened. He did not know.

My brother Dan objects in his own way. When in hospital he was asked to pose for photographs showing his movements in getting up from the floor; he agreed and the photographer insisted that he should rise according to the set of photographs that demonstrate those actions in a certain textbook. Dan had never risen in the way desired, but managed to learn how to do it. He *must* get up that way, the photographer said. Dan says his parlour-trick days are over, and after the photographs were taken he offered to show the photographer the way he always rose from the floor and a dozen different varieties, but his suggestion was too subtle a criticism for the camera-man — who was probably thinking in terms of illustrating a textbook rather than finding any differences from the textbook label! Later Dan had to be re-photographed.

I have thought a good deal about our weakness. The medical profession says it knows nothing about its origin or treatment. Not being a doctor I know nothing about the possible causes, but from a lifetime of experience I have come to certain conclusions. The first is that I classify our trouble not just as a weakness of the face, shoulder-blade and upper arm muscles, but as a complete weakness of the voluntary muscle system. And the second is to do with the cause. I believe ours is simply a deficiency

disease. The doctors may say that *not all* our voluntary muscles are affected, but it only shows some deficiency or other. Doctors talk mysteriously of a disease that attacks one muscle and leaves another alone; it seems to me that such a condition shows a deficiency that is not total.

The medical profession has been mystified by our complaint because it has, until now, never been in possession of a medicine that *directly* affects muscles.

I wonder what the second diagnosis will be?

*4th April.* I did not sleep well, so stayed in bed nearly all day and dozed intermittently. Dan got up late as well. He has an ironic sense of humour. He sits at the other side of the table and coughs antiphonally to me! As a variation, he pours medicine into two port wine glasses and fraternizes with me; I think he would stagger if he could!

*5th April.* Lady X came and talked about Ada whom she had seen at Pinner yesterday. She says that Ada is enjoying her rest and is eating well and looking much better. She told me that the man who is to make the second diagnosis is an authority on the new treatment for muscles.

I was told that I did not look at all well and, of course, if I attempt to talk I cough a good deal. Lady X asked me if I fancied anything, and as I said I did not permit myself fancies, she said she would send me a tonic — some port wine. I have never known a person to act as kindly as she does, and cannot imagine anyone sending a gift of wine.



Lady X said that Ada can stay on, and that Sister T. would bring her home in the car. I cannot possibly write in my present state; the way my mind races off now, when I think of the story, warns me that I would have a temperature very speedily if I began creative work.

Heard from Miss A.'s mother to-day. I shall always remember the talk we had when we first met outside the hospital at Lourdes and the stories she told us there. It was a hot, sunny afternoon, and the chestnut trees were in full bloom, giving shelter all along the carriage way down to the Grotto domain. We sat there prior to the afternoon baths. As a child she lived in Pau, and the sceptics there used to say, 'You are going to Lourdes? The water in the Gave de Pau is just as good!' Perhaps it is — as water.

Mrs. F. came to-day. Her friend, who was a nurse, wanted to know the early history of our trouble. (I suspect she has been reading up things concerning the new treatment.) We told her how everything began, so far as we know.

During the evening Mrs. Paddie, our old neighbour from Soho, came in. She had walked from her home, past rows of shops, and arrived at seven-thirty. She said that she wanted to buy some loose oats, as they are cheaper than the boxes, but the shop was sold out. We told her we only had boxed oats, but she said they take longer to cook, so we did not offer her any. She then asked us if we had any matches, as the shops were shut.

Dan played a record or two on the radiogram, and she was interested in an unbreakable record. Dan looked at me with a sardonic glint in his eyes and threw it to her. When she was going she asked for a cover for it as she could not walk through the streets like that. Dan

picked out a nice clean paper cover — it obviously meant that Mrs. Paddie had bought a new record. Dan gets a good deal of fun out of life.

Just lately I have read *Riceyman Steps*.

*6th April.* A quiet Saturday. Ada not here nor her friend. It makes a great difference.

*7th April.* Dan was taken to see Ada at Pinner in the side-car combination as it is visiting day there. They drove round the grounds, and his friend was very affected by some of the patients there. He is not one for talking, but he did say that most people have no idea how fortunate they are to have health and strength. He was particularly upset concerning a little girl of five who is really a pitiable case. The friend pushed Ada round the grounds in her bed (they go out into the open air when fine) and they said Ada is brighter and more lively.

They did not know their way when going there, so they asked an old man who looked a local product. After scratching his head and 'Oa-ah-ing' he told them to follow him — and they were in a motor-cycle combination! Evidently he doubted his powers of direction. I suggested they should have asked him to ride pillion!

M. came. She wanted to do some critical reading, but as I was not feeling sharp enough in mind I thought we should leave it as there is no hurry. My mind seems to have lost its pointedness for the time being and I am only interested in things in a diffused, distant kind of way, although my brain is quite active — too active at nights.

8th April. This afternoon a friend called. The way she knocks on our door is enough to bring out the troops from the barracks across the road. She always tells us some little story, generally an adventure of a relative.

Her sister in Kenya went through Uganda into the Congo — possibly for a pleasure tour, though why anyone should want to do that kind of thing out there for pleasure is beyond my understanding — and passed through a game preserve there. She was in a car. A wicked-looking elephant came near, scowled at her (evidently a bull elephant) and after pulling faces, winked (yes, I'm sure now it was a male!) but, it did not interfere with her. Perhaps the elephant could not identify the noisy animal the woman was riding, or there might have been a fight.

She went on into the Ituri forest, and there a pigmy man beckoned to her to follow him. She followed, not the least afraid. He took her to his home and proudly showed his wife, who came up to the woman's hips, and their little baby just like a doll. The Ituri pigmies are apparently very friendly creatures, which probably means that their smallness of stature has helped them to keep their naturalness as they are too small for trade exploitation — which is, generally speaking, the reason for the white races' interest in Africa.

Her sister bathed in water where there were hippos that did not seem to mind someone else using their bath water. In another place the natives had to beat the water to keep off crocodiles while she bathed. Cleanliness with a spice of danger.

There is a little bamboo church, and whenever a clergyman arrives they have a service. Unfortunately, the wild

bees have made their houses in the roof and they have to be cleared out first, so there are sometimes sticky complications when honey falls on the congregation.

Eileen Paddie came in this evening. She is a little chatterer, and the biggest cynic I have ever seen at fifteen years of age. She happened to go down to the front parlour — at the other end of the passage — and when she came back she said, 'There's Alfie and his Fan down there'. We asked what they were talking about. 'They're sitting facing one another in the armchairs round the fire and talking about the best things in life!' She humped herself forward and wagged her chin, but her tone was infinitely scornful.

*9th April.* Miss E. came unexpectedly this afternoon.

I showed her Ada's letter and we talked about the possibilities of treatment and a new diagnosis of our trouble. She said that a doctor once complained to her that a wrong name had been given to our complaint in the foreword to my diary. He wrote: 'If they have muscular atrophy they should be dead by now.'

Young Paddie came and helped Dan do some cooking, a fish dinner with parsley sauce and parsnips, a favourite dish. Afterwards Mum tried to think of a dish for to-morrow and Paddie had a bright idea. 'I know, let's make some pea-soup. I can do that!' We were tickled with the suggestion and remembered his first successful effort at cooking when he had patiently stood and scraped onions into the soup! He cannot find work and said, 'When you go after a job you can't tell them you are twenty or nineteen 'cause on your card it says you are

twenty-five, and they say you are *too old!*' It shows two things: that he is willing to work for a boy's wage, and is up against a boy labour racket. My young brother Alfie, who fortunately has not been out of work yet, is employed in the same racket. He drives a thirty-cwt. van, has done so since he was seventeen and a half, and is now getting wages less than some boys who ride tricycles — despite the arrangement recently made concerning hours and wages for drivers of commercial vehicles in London. Alfie will not join a union as he would be dismissed and he likes his present job. As it is more important that he should work and enjoy it than be properly paid (as he is still young) we do nothing about it. I wonder when young men will be 'too old at twenty-five' for war purposes?

There are so many women to-day who must work to keep themselves that in time there will be practically no work for married men or bachelors, as there will be enough boys and girls and married women and spinsters to fill the market. It looks as if the employers of labour are to blame, but it is not so. When women first entered the labour market, some bright people thought that they should be provided with appropriate trade unions; it was talked over, and rejected, possibly because they thought the women's work movement was only a passing phase. They must have been particularly thick-headed. The fact remains that because of that early blunder the problem of the wage and employment of men has been intensified. It showed them to be deficient in knowledge of history, for unemployment always follows war, and they should have seen that women once employed could not easily be sent home again, apart from spoiling the wage rate with cheaper labour.

10th April. Lady Y called. She wanted to know if I had seen the publisher. She seemed very pleased that her nephew was coming home from Canada, where he was the Governor-General. She was interested in John Buchan; it was an unusual appointment, she thought.

11th April. The doctor said that my pulse is too fast when he examined me to-day; that accounts for the excitedly fit feeling that suddenly goes, and leaves me flat. As I have only had four nights' proper sleep this past fortnight, he has given me some sleeping tablets, after making sure I would not fall on my face or do anything silly in a deep sleep. In bed I cannot do a thing, so I am quite safe.

The nurse and M. arrived almost together. Young Paddie went into the scullery and made tea, while M. lit the fire in the front room. I had to go there.

Later on Alfie and his girl occupied the front room and Dan had to take his friends into my room. This is because one of Dan's friends always seems to get on well with the girl Alfie is friendly with; it is rather a matter for jealousy between them, and so Dan's friend is not permitted in the room by Alfie at the same time as the girl!

When she was going home M. had to go down to the room for her things. Afterwards Alfie told me that she caught the girl sitting on his lap. And I told M. to knock. She said to them, 'Don't move!'

12th April. Have been thinking of Ada and the examination that she expects to-day. I wonder what the next man will say? I expect she will write as soon as

possible. I have no great hopes that it will be of any benefit to us.

13th April. Letter from Ada. She says, 'He rolled out all the old names for the secretary to take down. He is only doing a diagnosis for Mr. Q who will be able to tell from that whether he is going to inject or not. I will not be able to find out about the injection unless Sister T. tells me.'

14th April. This evening Dan brought his friend in and they played the gramophone. He is bored unless it is dance music, although he did ask for some old-time songs. For a change Dan played 'La Gioconda' and a selection from 'Samson and Delilah', and before he put on another record his friend said 'Good-night'.

16th April. Nothing seems to happen here. If we have no visitors and a bad wireless programme then it is likely to be a dull day from a diarist's point of view. Sometimes I think keeping a diary is a mistake in my circumstances, the most tedious imaginable. Until I can get back to writing, and read more, I feel that we only exist to struggle against the trials of each new day, and each day seems a little less satisfactory than the last. We wonder now, that, if Ada cannot walk when she comes home, what we can do.

17th April. A letter from Ada: 'It would not be advisable to try the injections as our case is an entirely different one from that other, and the treatment is in such

a *very* experimental stage. The doctor said it was all very well for anyone to make suggestions, but a very different thing for the one who had to give the final order.' Ada says she is relieved!

There is one thing in that refusal to experiment that is encouraging, and that is the admission of a lack of experience in the treatment. It does give one hope for the future.

Dan and his friends have quarrelled. They had all arranged to go camping at Claygate (where Dan has friends who own a farm and have given him permission to camp), but at the last minute they changed their Easter arrangements and are leaving Dan out completely. Mum has refused to let the boys come in here again; we allowed them to use the front room almost as a Club room, especially during the winter months.

18th April. M. came this evening and it was the brightest spot of the whole week. She and Dan cooked some pork sausages and tinned spaghetti, which Dan calls 'worms', especially when they are being eaten.

19th April. Good Friday. Not so good from Dan's point of view. Our fish dinner needed some attention but Dad went to bed before he knew our arrangements, and Alfie went out with his girl. I told Dan to leave the dinner until the last possible minute in the hope that someone would come and help. Eventually we decided to scrap the cooking except for the fish, so he cooked fish and made sauce, and we had it at 9 p.m. Perhaps it was improved by the increase in appetite, but



we all agreed that it was a most successful dish. I think Dan enjoyed giving Dad his dinner in bed — just fish and two kinds of 'sauce' — only one on the fish! Dan can be quite impertinent in silence, and decidedly eloquent.

*20th April.* Mr. D. came for some chess, and Alfie began by setting out the pieces for us, which amused my friend. As Alfie's girl was in the room we agreed that he was being specially attentive because she was present, and Mr. D. said it was the first time anything like that had happened. I lost two games. Mr. D. roared with laughter on one occasion when having me properly cornered and planning his final move he found that I was one move from checkmating him.

Nurse came unexpectedly and attended to Mum. Then she cooked our breakfast (at 6.0 p.m.) and we had a 'tea' of eggs and bacon — and cakes. The nurse is very good, and remarked, 'Matron should see me now!' I suppose a district nurse who has finished her work for the day is not expected to cook for her patients.

*21st April.* Easter Sunday. To think of Easter as the crown of Christian belief makes one think of the fear of war in the world at this moment.

Albert and Lil came after dinner to-day. They intended spending the rest of the holiday giving the place a clean-up.

Dan and Alfie went to see Ada at Pinner. They say she looks very well, but wants to come home. She may not be able to walk when she does get back, for two weeks in bed and the rest of the time in a wheel chair in circumstances that prevent her from doing anything for herself

are enough to have deprived her of her power to walk. It is an interesting comment on the medical view of her case that no one else appears to have thought of the risk she is running in not standing. We know what can happen, for we live with the trouble. Ada has already suggested in her letters that she may not be able to walk.

*22nd April.* Letter from M. She appears to have been 'pitched' amongst a group of bright young things. 'There's John, of Cambridge, and his sister Nora, and Joan, who "scouts". Then there is a long thin piece of work named Vivian but known as "the carthorse". His hair is faintly ginger with a moustache to match, his ears protrude and his chin comes to a point; he has a rosebud mouth. When he was four he knitted three ties for soldiers and sold them at 1s. 6d. each . . . John also knitted a scarf when four, but a horse ate it! . . . This evening they turned out all the lights and played "sardines". Joan hid inside a roll of lino. Someone put a hand down and felt a face, and poured water on it to make sure.'

And then I suppose they made apple-pie beds and did things to each other's pyjamas! The youth of England at play: the more I think of it the greater becomes my admiration for old age!

*23rd April.* A surprise visit from Lady X this afternoon.

She came to tell us that she had seen Ada that morning. It has been a change for Ada and came at the right time, if she had remained at home she would have been ill. Lady X mentioned the new muscle treatment and said that the man could not take the responsibility for recommending it to be tried on Ada.

I shall be glad to go there after I have finished my writing, but to go before that would be too risky as I know from experience how easily I am incapacitated.

A friend came in later to show us the photo of her sister with the pigmy woman and baby in the Ituri forest. The woman held the baby to cover a good deal of her nudity. The house was just behind, it was a kind of *kraal* made of branches and leaves, oval, with a small opening, through which they crawled, and the whole thing seemed a foot or so shorter than the pigmy woman.

I showed my friend the annual report of the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, and she said that she came from an old hunting family. I pointed to two members of her family amongst the subscribers; that made her smile and she took the literature away to read.

24th April. Mrs. F. called to see how Mum was, and she seemed surprised to learn that Dan and I had both been ill. She wondered how long it was since her last visit, and could not believe it was three weeks ago. I settled the question by referring to this diary, mentioning what she had talked about. She said, with a smile, that she must be careful.

We talked of the Jubilee arrangements and the Jubilee Trust Fund. Mrs. F. said it was a chance for people with pots of money ("and there *are* people with pots of money") to be patriotic.

Then she mentioned the possible danger from anarchists, saying that they would do anything for a sum of money. I thought that was being unfair to the bomb-throwers, and said that when an anarchist agrees to do such a deed he has not much hope of getting away alive,

and that it was as courageous as a soldier giving his life in battle, but possibly a perverted idealism. I think Mrs. F. was surprised to find that one could treat the anarchist's idea with any sympathy, but she agreed. Royalty and Anarchy are extremes, but both have their uses. A King is the figure-head of a system that maintains itself by the pressure of force in various ways, and an anarchist's bomb is an exclamation mark, as it were, that punctuates the pages of history. My objection is not to Kingship. One does not forget that the King is a man with a position and a responsibility that man should never have been expected to shoulder.

M. came unexpectedly, and was here only a few minutes when she had to answer the door to Lady Y. We had a most amusing talk. Lady Y had not been sleeping well and said that she read my diary at nights to put her in a good mood for sleep. It was said with a laugh. 'I came across your birthday again,' she said to Mum, and to Dan she mentioned that she often reads the places where I 'tick him off'. I think it was a general 'leg-pull'. Lady Y recently went to a psychologist (who has spent a lot of money on advertising) for advice about sleeping. She was told not to say 'I will sleep', but was to count up to twelve and say 'Sleep, sleep, sleep'. This gem of psychology was given for a half-crown at some kind of meeting. I explained the advice (as I always do — I shall die explaining things — if anyone is near at hand at the time). I said there was a danger of contra-suggestibility in the phrase 'I will sleep', which as a suggestion to the sub-conscious mind could have the opposite effect. The sub-conscious reacts to emotions and the fear of not sleeping is acknowledged in 'I *will* sleep'. I said it is far better not to trouble to say anything special, but always to think of bed as the place

in which one sleeps. Go to bed with the idea of sleeping, thinking of it as a friendly place, and only an illness can prevent sleep from coming. I did not charge a half-crown for the advice. I think that insomnia is not an illness in itself, but is always a symptom of something else.

Lady Y asked about the new treatment for muscles and we told her that it was not for us. Dan made us all laugh with his comment, 'They are still trying it on the dog!'

Afterwards we had a good discussion on the rights to private property and the sanctity of family life. I talked for about ten minutes and no one interrupted, which was a change. My attitude is, perhaps, as Mum objected, too idealistic, but it is simply, that the sanctity of family life does not need safeguarding if seen from the point of view of the individual's relationship to God. Where two people sincerely agree on that point the sanctity is enhanced, not endangered by any other idea at all, and there is the most complete union possible, or imaginable. The excuse of the weakness in human nature, in which one thinks in terms of private property, is due entirely to fear of insecurity. One does not always realize that 'Underneath are the Everlasting Arms'. Philosophy agrees with the principle of private property, making the best of a bad job. Apart from houses and land (which are held in a kind of trusteeship by the owner with the consent of the State), and apart from the false value of jewels, private ownership is merely a matter of figures on paper; people are rich only in paper-money. At any time an election may result in them being much the poorer, but they will not be robbed, for their riches are taken away already.

M. suggested that communism was on the right track in accepting responsibility for the nation's children. The only sound objection to communism is that it is entirely

materialistic, but it has grown from conditions that have been in practice never anything else but materialistic. It is not generally realized that children do not belong to us, but are State property. One has only to think of the things one must *not* do with children, to realize that we own them only by consent of the State, and when the time comes as in a war, male children are claimed. The Church says that children belong to God; the State makes the parents responsible until the State itself assumes control. Whose are the children? What is the sanctity of family life? Where does the right of private property come in at all?

But there is a solution. The solution is Voluntary Communism, and it is fundamentally a spiritual concept that grants God and man their rights.

*25th April.* We were up a little earlier than usual to prepare for Ada's return home, but she came sooner than expected and we were still unprepared; fortunately no one was with her in the car, and Alfie was here to carry her in. We had a few anxious minutes, waiting to see if she could stand, and then to hope she could walk. She stood and her muscles ached, so it seemed to be all right. Later on she walked about carefully.

Everything at the hospital was at the wrong height for her to be able to help herself, the floor was polished and she could scarcely stand on it. She says the place will not be much good to me.

She wanted to go to bed early but Alfie had put his push-bike in the way and we could not move it, neither could we find Alfie till close on 11 p.m.

The morning Ada came away there was an operation case in the same ward, a young woman was to have a foot

off. This person was highly strung and very nervous (who would not be?) and she kept on talking of songs and thinking of 'another one' from the song sheet she had in mind. Ada thought she could be of use and between them they had 'a concert'. Ada sang choruses of popular tunes and made a hit as a crooner. The favourite tune was 'My Kid's a Crooner' and Ada 'Boo-boo-ed' to the great satisfaction of the other person.

*26th April.* The doctor came this afternoon and was pleased to find me so well. Just before he came, Mum was asking Dan what he thought was wrong with her as she had a great dislike for food and always felt sick. Dan replied that it was wind and indigestion. Mum asked what she could take for it and he replied 'Whisky'. I told the doctor (as he was examining Mum) and asked, 'Do you think Dan will pass his Finals?' The doctor laughed and said, 'I think so. He has the right principles!' We said (Dan and I) that we did not get to sleep with his tablets and he replied that two generally sent him off quite well. 'That's because you have a clear conscience,' said Dan. 'No doubt it helps,' said the doctor.

We talked of the myasthenia gravis case again. The doctor explained that in that trouble the muscles and nerves work together but the muscles grow tired suddenly, a kind of instantaneous exhaustion, I suppose. Also the muscles respond to Galvanism — they jerk to an electric current. Our muscles have gone past that stage; I have only one that responds to the test. I said to Dan afterwards that the doctors knew all about myasthenia gravis and had definitely decided that it was a deficiency disease, but in our case they knew so little that they had not made up their minds.

The doctor wanted to know what we ate. Dan began. 'Soup, fish, chops, greens and potatoes, eggs.' The doctor interrupted, 'You do yourselves pretty well, that's quite good!' Dan laughed, 'Whoa! We get one of those each day!' He had purposely begun his recitation in the right order to give a wrong impression. 'That's a seven *day* course!' he explained. Doctor laughed.

27th April. M. came and brought Ada a book to read, Ethel Mannin's *Confessions and Impressions*. I find that she won a prize for an essay on kindness to animals. So did I, but mine was a certificate. 'Economy necessitated by the Great War prohibiting the purchase of prizes, etc.' Anyway, I was more pleased with the certificate than a book, but I only framed it when I found the edges had been eaten by mice. I covered a fine engraving of the Entry into Jerusalem to make a stiff back in the frame for my certificate! I was fifteen.

28th April. Dan had a bad accident this morning, but it did not make him change his mind about going out. He fell and struck the corner of the sideboard with his collar bone just under his neck. If it had been a half inch higher he would have broken the bone, the flesh is cut and badly bruised.

I began writing again and did a few pages.

Dinner to-day was a failure. In the process of cooking the joint was burnt and so were the potatoes, and we discovered that Alfie had forgotten to buy greens. And we had no peas in tins, as we generally have. Fortunately, we had some beetroot left over from yesterday.

Dan, Alfie and their friend went out for the day to



Faversham and they had a good time. Dan must be very amusing company, for the people they visited asked him if he would like a holiday with them in the summer. I think it is extremely kind. Afterwards we learned that both people who invited Dan had been at some time disabled. True knowledgeable sympathy. There is no understanding akin to it.

30th April. We saved Ada's *Daily Mirror* copies so that she could read the story. It is one by Vicki Baum called *Men Never Know*. I do not know whether the translation is unfortunate, but Ada's critical faculty (which never sleeps) has been enjoying itself. She read out: 'Evelyn had been in the habit of fainting for several months, ever since Bärchen's birth.' Of course, the baby was bottle fed during those periods! Later on she read out, 'Frank paced to and fro with a feeling of impatience and dissatisfaction. He suddenly realized that he was tired. His mouth opened in a large gaping yawn. And there came the train'. He was pacing to and fro on the station platform, as the reader is told in the previous paragraph. Young Paddie, who was here at the time, showed unsuspected powers of literary criticism. He exclaimed, 'Ha! He thinks he is a railway tunnel!'

This evening I had a unique experience. I received two letters by the same post, and both were from publishers. A royalty cheque in one letter, and an appointment date in the other.

I got into a fix with part of my writing to-day, so, after I had wasted a good deal of time, I jumped ahead to the next chapter and continued from there. I did very little writing as I kept on thinking of the puzzling previous chapter.

*1st May.* Father H. came to-day and he is rather depressed about Dan's chance of going to Lourdes this year. Apparently there are twenty applicants but only room for ten stretcher cases. I may be hard-headed, for I am not disturbed by the thought. I think Dan will be chosen. Father H. is going to Belgium for an early holiday, and he certainly can do with one. Lately he is looking very tired.

Miss E. came and we talked of medical treatment, particularly of the kind of injections like the myasthenia gravis variety. She knew of a man who was sent to London to be treated by a specialist. The injection was the kill or cure kind; fortunately it was a cure, one of the rare occasions. The very next case treated died next day. She wanted to know why we could not be given the new treatment. It led to a discussion about our trouble, and she mentioned that the specialist has just had a 'big book' prepared for publication about such diseases. It happens that we were photographed for that specialist in 1928, so we are specimens in that book, I think. Dan objected at the time to having to pose in positions he had never adopted in his life, but they fitted into the textbook history of similar cases to ours, so the photographer had his way — until the specialist saw the photographs.

No difficulty to-day with the part of the writing that puzzled me yesterday.

*2nd May.* Friend called to-day to return the cruel sports literature I had lent her. She said, 'Undoubtedly it is cruel, but when you have been brought up on hunting you look at it differently!' She looked at me with grim humour in her eyes. 'No doubt we shall be

educated out of it in time!' I said nothing in reply, but although I had not 'been brought up' on cruel sports, I felt that I had not missed anything. I remember Lady Oxford saying on the wireless, in a discussion on sport, that she had broken nearly every bone in her body while fox hunting!

Young Paddie came in again to-day, and I was about to claim him when I found that Dan had forestalled me in making arrangements to be taken out to see the Jubilee decorations. They went out, Mum went to sleep, and Ada lay down in her own room, so I had a nice quiet afternoon in which to write.

*3rd May.* To-day Ada read over a hundred pages of my writing. We have buried the hatchet. She read out a great deal of the dialogue, and Alfie said (he was reading a cowboy story) 'Here, you give me that to read and you have this!' He laughed a good deal at some of the humour (parts that I consider as primarily pathetic), then he said, 'It's pathetic too, isn't it?' We stayed up till 2 a.m. reading the MS.

*4th May.* M. came, as usual. She did Esperanto with Ada, while I lost at chess, and then served our tea. After that, we did this week's Bible study. It was very interesting, but a little obscure.

We all listened to an Old Music Hall programme and M. remarked: 'The tunes in those days were all the same, just as the dance tunes are now'. We sang some of the choruses.

During the dance band music Ambrose and his band

played 'Have you written home to Mother?' and Elsie Carlisle sang the chorus (with a cold). I looked at Mum and saw her grinning at the words, 'Then write to her to-day'. She was thinking of buying the song on a record to give 'her married son'. The next tune was 'Georgia', one of our favourites; we hoped Albert was listening. Helen Raymond sang later and she has a particularly good voice for a 'croonerette'. She sings in a close harmony trio but should be soloist in a band.

6th May. Jubilee Day. Dan and Alfie went out for the day, and I heard Dan ask 'Our Father' to get up and make them some sandwiches but thought nothing of it at the time, though I did marvel at his cheek. Ada just got up in time to switch on the wireless for the St. Paul's ceremony. The most effective piece was the Holst tune which was sung in unison by voices of different timbre and range. Ada passed a comment by saying that one of the hymns sung might have been called 'All people that on Earth *do Well*'.

We listened to the King's Address. His Majesty even mentioned those who are 'disabled'. The 'round the Empire' broadcast was a failure, a weak shade of Christmas without the Goodwill. I think the King should be given a long holiday, instead he will probably die of overwork. We and Japan are the only Empires left and that is because of our monarchy, limited as it is. The people that on earth do well see the benefit of a limited monarchy, and it will be a poor look out for the British Isles if ever we abolish our monarchy — unless the rest of Europe goes Communist. It is a funny world, and we have to make the best of the worst, I suppose. What the world

needs is a Change of spirit — an inward revolution, but where Christ fails who can succeed?

We celebrated the Jubilee in our own way; when we looked for the remains of our salted beef that was for dinner to-day we found that Dad had made sandwiches to some effect for not a scrap of meat was left. So, we had no dinner.

When the 'pubs' closed in the afternoon a number of people on this estate suddenly discovered their patriotism — to the tune of 'Knees up, Mother Brown' and other ribaldries. It amused me to think that mob emotion and hops combined can be so effective.

One family of relatives became jubilant. We had a surprise visit from Aunt, Dora and baby, and Beattie. We saw the baby 'Stuart' for the first time and he is a prize baby, as contented and jolly as a child in an advertisement — and what more could a mother want? The child took a fancy to Dad and *would* go to him; they went outside to watch the hop celebrants and the baby thoroughly approved. Beattie has promised to bring her husband along for the first time next Sunday, possibly to take me out.

When Dan and Alfie came home they told us of the carnivals they had seen out by Brasted and that district; everything from a female Dick Turpin, Dickens' characters, Campbell's Bluebird (built over a car) and also the 'Queen Mary' (over a car). The people had even painted gates red, white and blue.

From one of the Rovers responsible for part of the Hyde Park arrangements we had some facts about the beacon there. One brewery, for instance, sent 200 double crates for the fire and the Office of Works had three times as much wood as they were permitted to use. The bonfire

was at first to be 30 feet high, then they thought it would be too small so decided on one 50 feet high, but along came the police and said it must not be more than 25 feet and must be out in an hour. Rockets were prohibited because of the sticks, all the park chairs were locked away as well!

Seventy people were treated at one first aid station near the bonfire; they had fainted. The bonfire had everything inflammable on it from varnish to flashlight powder.

One of the Jubilee failures was due to the first aid station being on some professional female's beat, and, according to the Rover, she had a blank day; well, it was a national holiday!

Albert and Lil turned up very late and left early, to go to an open air celebration — admission 1s. 6d. to pay for the beer.

Some of the poorer districts had 'beanos', street parties and the like, and they all had their own mottoes — 'No landlords invited'. 'God Bless 'em!' 'No road, no landlords, no tallymen. Money spent.' 'Lousy but Loyal.' I'll bet it was their first real Bank Holiday free from law and order; even pianos in the streets!

One friend of Dan's celebrated by running into a police trap on a motor-bike at 38 m.p.h. He was fined less than a month ago, and must now sell his bike to pay this fine.

I have heard a lot about the street decorations but have seen nothing of them.

When the 'pubs' opened, the hop celebrants took 'Mother Brown', with her knees up, back to the nearest public bars.

7<sup>th</sup> May. The doctor came in to-day to fill in a medical certificate so that Dan can go to Lourdes. He was very jovial. Mum remarked, 'You look as if you've been in the sun' (I think she was being colloquial) but the doctor replied that he had. He went to the races at Northolt and had not got home until 7 a.m. this morning. That is jubilation if you like!

Mum said she was easily depressed, and the doctor replied, 'You shouldn't be, with such a lively family!'

8<sup>th</sup> May. Early to-day we received a mystery bottle of whisky and we had no idea who sent it. Later on Lady Y called. She asked if we had received some whisky. Mum replied, 'Yes, but I had blamed the doctor for it!' Lady Y laughed and said, 'Well, you can blame him because he 'phoned me up and happened to mention you were depressed, so I went out and bought the whisky for you'. Mum said she would drink our visitor's health each time she took the 'medicine'. I said, 'Your health should suddenly increase!' which brought much expostulation from Mum.

As she was going she missed Dan. 'Where is Ginger?' she asked. He replied for himself from the scullery where he was doing some cooking. She went there and watched him.

M. came unexpectedly. We had a good talk on humanitarianism and the significance of life. She has been reading one of Henry Salt's books, *The Creed of Kinship*. M. said, 'To think that we are akin to the fat sows we saw at Easter. It is a humbling thought!'

The significance of life, to my mind, is clear. Pain, suffering, sickness, cruelty; if we look at life we can see

that all those things that worry and grieve us have their importance because death, not life, is the problem. Why should some people or animals suffer and others not suffer? I think I know. What have I got that makes me happy even now? There is one fact, I think, that few people ever suspect. A human being is in a state of isolation that defies all efforts at breaking through. The individual consciousness seeks for contacts with others, and believes it achieves true contact, but it is a deception. Subjective isolation is a law of creation. I asked myself, 'Why do people seek and seek for contacts that when apparently attained never satisfy?' Because the isolation is the primary condition, and the proper contact is the fulfilment of being. How many varieties of contact are there? Only two, I believe. We try one, naturally, but do not always attempt the other. To me it is quite a simple fact that being isolated as we are we must relate ourselves to the Source of Life to find a reason for the isolation. But, instead, we search the world for a way out of our isolation, and no one has yet broken through in that way. People think that human love solves the problem, but it does not do so alone. Once admit that isolation is the natural state of the soul, and one at once sees that to break through this isolation we must turn to God first. It then seems as if this isolation is a protective barrier given for our own spiritual well-being. It is no use knocking one's head against a brick wall that is too high; and, like the lunatic in the story, what a relief when one leaves off! This isolation is one of the conditions of 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' and *then* 'thy neighbour as thyself'. I know nothing else as simple. One sees God everywhere as St. Francis did, present in His work, and His greatest work is 'thy neighbour'.



Live to that plan and there is no isolation: relate everything to the Source and Sustainer of everything (even human folly) and there remains no mystery. The 'Hound of Heaven' is one aspect of the situation.

9th May. Paddie took Dan out in a chair and pushed him to Putney Hill. They enjoyed themselves, and Dan bought some salad for tea.

10th May. Read part of *My Life* by Helen Keller while waiting for the publisher to call. It is a unique book.

The publisher is nice, and he stayed for one and three-quarter hours. We talked about my writing and he examined some of it. The position is that I must finish writing in three to six weeks at the most. I need not have the story typed — it will save time. He looked over my book case and said he preferred Wodehouse. I am apparently reading the wrong kind of books: classics, of course!

12th May. Dad celebrated his birthday by staying up all day and only having one hour's sleep before going to work to-night. Still, it is his birthday.

Beattie brought her husband along but it was too cold for going out. We talked in the front room and had some music. Beattie and I played duets, by ear; some were rather chancey. We talked about Greek to her husband who was born in Cyprus and were soon discussing words and derivations. Then we had a talk on religion. The Greek Church is very strict from the fasting point of

view. Forty-eight days' real fasting for Lent, nothing at all on Holy Saturday; altogether a too rigorous dietary! Forty days' fasting before Christmas. Why, Catholic fasting is a picnic compared with it. He asked me where Cain found a wife and I said that the writers of Genesis only mentioned women when they were important; we went through the first chapter of Genesis, and then I showed him the first chapter of Matthew, pointing out the mother of Solomon as an example of mentioning women.

He wants to come again after his work at Margate is finished. They left at nearly midnight.

13th May. The people next door provide some amusement now and then. Their boy is nearly six feet tall and his parents are small. The father, a tiny man, uses most flamboyant language at times, but is as timid as a rabbit. The youngsters call the father 'Tiger', because of the noise he makes. To-day Tiger was 'burning bright', as it were, objecting to being ordered about by his streaky progeny. He stood on the doorstep (door wide open) and shouted down the passage, 'I won't do as I'm told'. He looked round and saw me at the door, that gave him courage. 'One of these days I'll lose my temper and I'll — I'll *bruise* yer!' he cried.

Dan has a troublesome cough. We hope he is well in time to go to Lourdes with the National Pilgrimage this month.

14th May. Alfie has a cold so he stayed in bed. His manager sent an imperative demand for a doctor's certificate to be returned at once. Alfie replied

that he would bring one with him to-morrow, if he felt well enough. Alfie is being paid very small wages, so he is cheeky. The other day he lost a delivery docket and the manager hauled him up in the office to bark at him. Alfie let him run on until the manager said, 'I ought to charge you a shilling for that!' Alfie took notice at the mention of money and said, '*You* lost a ten-shilling note the other day.' The manager gave it up.

The piano tuner came and surprised us all by saying he had bought an old motor-cycle to do his round on. These old boys are the limit; he must be sixty years old. He talked to Alfie all the time and tuned middle C to a discourse on 'big-ends and conkings out'.

15th May. A quiet day. I did some writing. My progress is so slow that I cannot imagine myself getting finished in time. I have very little writing paper left.

16th May. Have run out of writing paper and have no chance of getting any more. I use Army and Navy Stores 'Sermon Paper' at 2lbs. for a shilling. Now I am reduced to cutting up exercise books.

Dan just sits by the fireside and coughs, reading most of the time.

17th May. Dan had a bad fall but, fortunately, Alfie was here. Dan just sat down and cursed his luck for a couple of minutes, then turned his back on this world and lost himself on the rolling prairie.

Then, this evening Ada went to call him from the end room for dinner; she slipped and banged her head on the room door. One of Dan's friends heard the bang, he was outside, came in quickly (he knows how to find the key), and managed to pick Ada up. She sat down for the rest of the day. Dan had to do the cooking and serving.

Late to-night he collapsed and we had to give him brandy and put him to bed. He said just beforehand, 'If I'm alive to-morrow I'll make my will'. He probably meant he would leave all his troubles to Alfie.

*18th May.* M. came. She made us some tea, but before we had anything to eat Mr. D. arrived. I hastily drank my tea. Instead of chess, he wondered whether I would prefer a drive. I did. He asked Ada, but she had a headache; asked M. and she preferred Ada's company to mine—for which I excuse her! Alfie came and we went out Sutton way, pulled up at a tea shanty and Mr. D. talked to the man whom he knew. We were given a cup of tea, and I asked for a 'hot pie' which I saw advertised; that served as breakfast for me, and lunch for Alfie. It was a nice day and I opened the window and sucked in the air. In the distance I saw a woman going in and out of a bungalow and I thought it might be a happy life.

When I got back Lady Y called and, as usual, was in good spirits. She told us of her cousin who went to see the sights and hoped to catch a view of the King or Queen. She asked a policeman if the King would be coming out. 'No', said the constable, 'he's tucked well up in bed, and he's had his Ovaltine!' Unfortunately

for the veracity of the constable, the King and Queen came out at that moment.

Between eleven and midnight there was a soft knock on our door; Alfie went out to answer it and found a couple in the darkness of our corner — a guardsman and a girl. The couple said, 'Sorry!' and Alfie closed the door again, so as not to intrude upon their whoopee. A little later the knock came again and Alfie lost his consideration for the whoopeemongers. He went out and said that they would get a pail of water if they did not go away. A little while ago a porter going the rounds late at night came across a couple of people who were being 'very friendly'. In his surprise the porter said, 'You can't do that here' — obviously not believing the evidence of his eyes.

I am thinking of asking the management to put lights in the estate corners, either for our benefit or so that those inclined to whoopee can see clearly, or be seen.

*19th May.* Dan is better to-day and does not look as if he has a temperature. He said he 'sweated it out' last night. He still coughs badly, and has two cowboy stories to read.

*20th May.* 'Lawrence of Arabia' has died from the results of his motor-cycle accident. He must have had great strength of mind; to throw over the chances he had of staying at the top of the ladder, shows how steadfastly his mind stood. I think he was an intense pacifist after his experiences of being a prime mover in the slaughter we call war. It is a pity the newspapers could not leave him alone when he wanted to be in retirement.

21st May. Miss A. called. She told us of her experiences when trying to see the flood lighting for the Jubilee. That evening the park gates were closed, but Miss A. saw boys going up a lamp-post to climb the railings to get a view of the lighting. 'Why not?' she thought, and shinned up the lamp-post and over like the boys. She had a grand view, then on coming out, at a different spot, she showed another lady how it was done with the aid of a seat. Shades of the Suffrage Girls! It is an insight to what custom denies women, but it has its other side; if women had not been put into such a position, there would not have been the home civilization there is. She stooped to conquer. Civilization is built on Subjection — by the builders, but it is the subjected who become eventually the root and foundation.

22nd May. M. came unexpectedly and saw me doing some writing. 'Ah!' she said, 'George is working!' I certainly *look* as if I mean it. She cooked herself a little snack. Mum is very amused at her confidence here, which shows how completely she has become used to our 'menagerie'.

We had a talk on Higher Criticism. She raised the point of putting some of the gospels into inverted commas to show which words were said by Jesus, and which were comments by the writers. It does make things clearer, but the fallacy in it is that you choose bits to put into commas which suit your own brand of theology: if you don't accept the idea of Hell find the places and comma them off to suit; get the first remark by Jesus to show there may not be a Hell, and then say that the rest is

wrong interpretation by the gospel writers. It seems hardly believable that the gospel writers should have still misunderstood the message of Jesus even when writing the gospels. The Catholics have a better idea than that; they say that the words of Jesus are explicit theology, and even admitting that the rest is interpretation, it then becomes implicit theology — after all, the writers or the people who supplied the information were there when Jesus spoke.

To-day, young Paddie came and Mum asked him to help with the dinner; she chose a meat pudding. While I was writing on one corner of the table, he was scraping up suet on the other and shaking the table; however, that was a minor difficulty. Later, when M. had been here some time she smelled something burning; it was our pudding and someone had accidentally knocked the gas higher when at the stove. We had an hour's suspense, then to our satisfaction found that the pudding was not burned.

Still pegging away at my writing. I have read that Conan Doyle used to write his stories in a room sometimes filled with people and the buzz of conversation; I believe it, for I have to try it under similar difficulties, sometimes I have the radio as an added distraction. To-night I wrote with Mum, Ada, Alfie and Dan all talking, and a dance band on the air as well.

*23rd May.* Young Paddie came here early and gave everyone tea in bed. I got up to keep him company. We decided to have another cooked dinner — salt beef and carrots, etc.

Miss V. called after going to the flower show. Strangely enough the talk turned on Higher Criticism again. She

said she is Anglo-Catholic. I suggested that the difficulty of that denomination was that its criticism goes by what amounts to the personal judgment of the individual; the danger there is that thousands can be swayed in this way, but when one loses faith in the individual judgment one has nothing left with which to replace it. And to lose faith in that way only needs a person to come under the sway of another individual judgment with different theological values; and so, we get Christian sects as numerous as the number of personalities. If only for that reason one can see that Rome has an almost impregnable position; an unswerving authority that binds the world, a sound historical position, and, not least, uniformity in language and ceremonial.

*24th May.* Ada went out in the sidecar with Alfie driving; they went to see Albert and Lil who were in none of their usual haunts and were not at home, so Ada went off to visit the Aunt who came to see us on Jubilee day.

Lady X came.

We talked of Pinner and of Dan going to Lourdes on Tuesday next. She said we will all have to be saints when he comes back, and a little while afterwards suggested he should go to Pinner for a rest after the Pilgrimage. I wonder if she thought this new saintliness would be too great a strain for us ordinary mortals?

*25th May.* When M. came we talked of holidays. I had written to a nurse we know of and it looks as if we can all go within a few weeks.



26th May. I stayed up till three this morning writing and was not too tired when I went to bed. I wrote so as not to waste a whole day in 'luxurious idleness' — that is what it feels like to have a day off.

The estate boys and girls are still suffering from Jubilee fever — in the way it was intended to affect them. They play at 'wars' and sing 'Land of Hope and Glory' where previously they used to sing 'Roll Along Covered Wagon' or the latest popular tune about being 'Afraid to open your letter'. Some soldiers of the future, I'm afraid.

Dan went out and told me he saw a procession headed by a band. The banners declared in various phrases: 'Save Our Children from Another War' — a praiseworthy thought. The band was playing a *military march*!

I generally write rather late; to-day I finished at about ten-fifteen and felt I had left off too early. My mind was rather tired and I could not switch on to a different idea in the story with any freshness, so I knew I had to leave it for another day.

Wrote to nurse in Worthing asking her to book our dates.

Father H. came this afternoon and brought the rest of the papers to fill in for Lourdes. He said to Dan, 'I shall not ask you to walk to the station'. Dan promptly replied: 'And you won't have to ask me to walk home when I get back!' That might mean anything, but it suggests he will return under his own motive power! It is fun of the sort that you may not find in any other religion but the Catholic. It is a humorous declaration of faith.

27th May. I waited all day for more writing paper and got some just before the entertainment began on the wireless. The wireless won. Then Lil came and the

place was turned upside down while the washing was sorted and put away and Dan's clothes for Lourdes packed.

Afterwards I tried to do some writing but developed a headache, though I managed to do two pages. When I got to bed I was quite exhausted and could not sleep. Dan went to bed at 2 a.m. but was up again at 5 a.m. when Dad went out to finish his work. Ada was up at six. We were all worn out.

When I got to sleep I dreamt I was hanging by my elbows out of a window and could not get back. My next dream was that I was walking downstairs when someone hit me on top of the head with a stool, so I refused to live at home any longer! Both dreams reflect by their emotional content the wish of my exhausted state to get away from everything — and home is the *only* 'everything' I have known. Am I right, Mr. Freud? Or was it indigestion?

I had a few words with Ada; she said, 'You bleating old nanny goat — get on with your washing!' I presume she objects to my 'butting in' and refers also to my writing. If I knew for certain that only *Billy* goats butted I would correct her; but she stands correction very badly, like most of us.

*28th May.* Father H. came early with a car and Alfie carried Dan out. The adventure has begun for Dan. Two of the girls from the estate have gone to see him off. Alfie came back apparently unaffected by the sight of the National Pilgrimage. The girls returned glad they had been there for the singing and to receive the Blessing.

Mrs. B. came this afternoon — just as I had begun writing — I had managed to do twelve lines and one word — I counted them. At her bungalow this week-end the stove burnt up the pots — while she was out for a few minutes.

I resumed writing just as the wireless was 'turned on' again. The 'Roosters' and other bits of entertainment. I gave it up.

*29th May.* Have been working well to-day. I had an idea for treating a chapter from a special angle.

Mum has been wondering how we would manage our cooking with Dan away. Alfie whispered to her that his holidays began next week. Mum immediately exclaimed to me, 'You see how providence works for us!' So, to complete the scene I read to her what I had just written about 'Mary Ann's' special providence. She knows the real 'Mary Ann' better than I do, and she says it is just like her.

*30th May.* Writing all day and enjoying it. By supper time I had finished the chapter. I had an idea this morning which enabled me to save a part of the MS. I thought I could not use it, but treated from 'Mary Ann's' angle it has become more funny, and it was that before. I read it out to all, and Alfie and Ada had a good laugh. As I wrote it in Mum's room, she had a good idea of what I was doing.

*31st May.* Another day of writing. It is getting near to the end and it is very interesting — to me.

Lady Y brought Mum a bottle of peppermint of a

special kind — a non-alcoholic liqueur. Alfie noticed the price label had nothing on it, so thinking it a good idea wrote 20/- in the space.

*2nd June.* M. came to-day, so did Beattie and her husband. Lil came earlier and did a good deal of cleaning up — much to Dad's disgust. He tried to stop her, but she took the pail of water away again and got on with the work. Dad had cooked the dinner, so he had done his share for the time being — but he could have cleaned the passage earlier in the morning.

Mitch, Beattie's husband, told me some gangster stories. One day he was pulled up by a policeman as he was about to turn a corner. 'Can't you see there's a hold-up down there?' — Not bad for America.

*3rd June.* Mrs. F. came and amongst other things we talked of dictators. I referred to the Catholic Church as a dictatorship — and I saw Mrs. F. look up as though I had said something scandalous. Then I explained that I meant it was a spiritual dictatorship and that was approved of.

The talk went on to family life, and I said I had an idea for improving on Nature. I said that children should only come to those people who were happily married, as a sign of the completeness of the marriage. Not a bad idea, but it leaves out of consideration — human nature. The idea amused Mrs. F. very much.

Father H. came in and one of the things he noticed was the bottle of peppermint. He decided to have some. I was rather surprised, but he mentioned that it must be

good — on account of the price. We told him that Alfie had put on the price — but he had some all the same.

To-day I reached the 500th page of my writing and am very pleased with the subject matter and the speed. Every little while I have to stop as I ache rather badly. Since my right leg went wrong I endure a good deal of pain and inconvenience from a deadening which goes from my thigh down to my toes; it has happened so often lately that my leg is almost useless and feels like a piece of string.

*4th June.* Am very keen and busy with the writing, and made the discovery that I have ten pages less to write than I thought; it is a relief, as it means so much less to worry over. Ten pages can contain a surprising number of problems.

Alfie is enjoying his holiday. He is one of the most self-contained persons I know — and I think it is due in part to my interest in psychology — the principle of letting him face up to everything himself and not 'breaking him in' with heavy father stuff. Now he is more than a little selfish and a bit of a bully; but he is a man; unfortunately, he has no sign of intellectual interests and only reads cowboy stories. For the second day in succession he has risen early to go out with his friend on a motor-bike.

Alfie had no pocket money left and was trying to borrow to go to a cinema. Mum paid but she gave him a talking-to.

*5th June.* To-day Dan returned from Lourdes; arrived at Victoria very late because the French train broke down. Even that extra time did not help us to get

Alfie to the station to bring Dan home. We were all up early except Alfie, and for hours we called him, then Ada lost her temper and told him her private and very personal opinion of his character in various shades of colour and meaning. It was a remarkable effort completely wasted, but I think Ada felt better for it.

After three-quarters of an hour or so, when we thought of Dan almost taking root on the platform, a car came to the door with him — brought home by a friend of Father H.'s. Our priest had an appointment and could not wait for the delayed train.

Alfie was just getting up when Dan arrived.

I was eager to learn what Dan thought of the pilgrimage, and he surprised me by saying he was disappointed. I think he was a little annoyed. To one going on a first pilgrimage it is a surprise to notice the excursion-like air that pervades the atmosphere on the train, until a smiling priest comes along and waves a rosary, giving the order for the first set of prayers. The people, handmaids and brancardiers, seem to fill the corridor and there is a continual buzz of conversation and greetings — like a Girls' Friendly Society and Rovers' outing combined. Several people, the regulars, came to Dan and asked, 'Are you a Thomas?' It helped him to settle down. Ah me — such is Fame, and family resemblance!

I saw some of Dan's reactions to Lourdes coming out in the eloquent way he described what occurs there. He saw a minor cure, but except that a doctor examined a man's leg and the man discarded a leg sling no one took any notice. It is only the instantaneous happenings that are investigated, those cures with an element of the miraculous. Dan's chief grumble was that he was nearly drowned in his first bath — a total immersion, when his

head was under water all the time the prayers were said. After that he had only partial immersion — head out.

He was struck by the fervour of the foreign pilgrims especially in contrast to his first impression of the English. The atmosphere in the Grotto domain is indescribable. One is taken back into the pages of the Gospels and one can feel what the sick felt who lay by the wayside waiting for Jesus to pass. No wonder that most cures are expected at the Blessing of the Sick. I have seen doctors walking behind in the Blessing procession and they are closely watching the sick — one could see the anxious expectancy in their eyes — and they were doctors, not priests of whom such an attitude might be expected.

6th June. Alfie still has no pocket money to-day, and Mum is punishing him by refusing to lend him any. He wanted to see a special film, *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, and because it *was* special, Mum was obdurate. Alfie spoilt his chances with me by saying, before he had asked, 'I know *you* won't lend me anything' — that, of course, made up my mind for me, but eventually Dan gave him enough to go.

Had another busy day writing. It is nearly finished and I am very interested.

7th June. Writing all day. By half-past ten I had finished the book and Ada was at once pointed in her comment — she turned on the dance music at full blast — the first time for months that it has been really loud. Dan, who was looking out of the window at the other end of the flat, guessed what it meant.

That gesture is a typical example of the psychological effect of the lifting of a ban — a momentary swing to the other extreme.

I re-wrote the last page several times to get the best effect, and, even now, I am not quite sure. However, it is good to feel that I have come to the end of several months' labour.

I read out what I had written and the critics approved — four of them — Mum, Ada, Dan and Alfie, and all criticizing from different angles.

*8th June.* To-day I felt lost without the anxiety and strain of the writing. I lay back resting in my chair thinking of the last page, and finally rewrote it once more, adding what had been nagging at me. Now I feel I have done my best. In a few days I expect I shall think that I could do some parts better, but that is to be expected, or else one's first work would always be actually the best, and that is not the rule.

I relaxed completely. I am going to write to the publisher asking him to call and collect the MS. which he had offered to do, and until he comes I shall go over it cleaning up the pages.

*9th June.* Ada has begun re-reading critically for slips and corrections; she makes comments on a separate sheet of paper for me to go over later. I started re-writing the first chapter again as it is in an awful mess through blue-pencilling. Every now and then I add a few words and it makes the old familiar material surprisingly fresh. It is much speedier work.



10th June. I was going to write to the publisher to-night but have gone on re-writing, and the chapter looks much better. I ran out of paper and Dad went out specially and bought me some exercise books. I wrote all day. Ada is making headway with her corrections and passing comments every few pages that almost puts me out of my stride, but I have found a way of quieting her. Every time she begins to say something I interrupt with 'All right, put it on paper!' This has the double effect of making her comments short (she does not like writing because of her weak hands) and it also preserves the silence. Incidentally, it puts me in the position of being able to veto her remarks in silence whenever necessary — not that I get the best of it, even so.

11th June. Mum was ill again to-day with bad stomach pains. We have begun to see which kinds of food cause it; raw apples, salads, and the like — especially spring onions. We give her an alkaline as chief antidote.

Mrs. B. came, and found me in the middle of a paragraph which I was reconstructing. I finished it, then explained things about Mum. Mrs. B. was most sympathetic, but nothing could be done. She had brought us a salad already prepared and some home-made veal brawn so that we could have an indoor picnic — with the window wide open — to add space and the sound of trains. We could almost hear the cows lowing. Mum looked on, wishing she could have some salad. We had to clear the table of manuscript before anything could be done, and it was piled unceremoniously at the back. I hoped no one would knock over the tea in that direction — someone generally does so, especially if there happens to be a clean cloth on at the time.

12th June. To-day I began correcting from Ada's notes, a word here and there, sometimes so many on one page due to crossing out or omission that I chose to re-write some pages. For the first few chapters I put on a clean front page, to give the 'Reader' a better impression; gradually the necessity for re-writing became less.

The publisher will come on Friday to collect the MS.

13th June. Ada and I were hard at it all day and right on till 2.30 a.m. when I had seen to her last remark. She has surpassed herself in hard work and critical ability (done silently, but with terrific pointedness. I think she knows the quickest way through my thick skull). A good many of her suggestions were alternative words, either the necessity for them (of which I was aware) or the provision of the word. When we had finished, Alfie was still up, so we asked him to tie the MS. in a brown paper parcel and put it on the table in the end room.

I have had no mind for anything else these past few days, and I am very glad to have the work finished. It is a satisfactory feeling to know you have really tried and have brought an effort to its conclusion.

14th June. The publisher came this afternoon. He sat on the divan and looked very comfortable, and we were soon talking of the manuscript which he examined, passing some pages, then reading carefully. 'That's a good bit about Mrs. Finn', he said, but I could not catch sight of the page. He asked a question about the 'love interest', which was a minor shock, as his criticism had contained nothing about that. On examining

the last two chapters he said it would possibly need another section, just to clear up the situation and the love interest. He gave me advice on the way to handle the section, but I shall not use his suggestion — it would be too light, I think. My idea is to use a simple situation but to get some depth into it as well as the 'smile and tear' which would be 'all the better'. He asked me what I thought of the story, and I said I had done the best I could and, though I've read it many times, each time I added some new writing the whole scene had become fresh and alive again. Ada, who was also asked, said she thought it was improved, and she conveyed conviction. She should know as she has been terribly effective in her criticism. Only the other night we had a row over a paragraph I had written, and to placate her I re-wrote it the next morning and we had another row over that. Finally I took the paragraph sentence by sentence and got her consent to the idea, and then, by changing a word, I found we were in agreement.

The publisher examined the beginning and the end, saying they were most important, then Ada made a parcel of the MS. I had my book of reviews of the *Tenement* in the room and I thought he might be interested in them. He was. He leaned back and went quickly through the book, then returned twice to a very good review by James Agate. He smiled and passed a remark which suggested I should not believe all of their statements. He asked me what kind of terms I would want if the thing went through and I replied, 'The best I can get' — which made him laugh and say, 'A good idea!' Taking a piece of paper from his pocket he said that I would not want worse terms than I received for the other, and I did not reply. Then I told him what my other terms were. He mentioned the possibility of a foreword and I suggested John

Oxenham, but he said, 'He did the last'. (This was very interesting, because I had refused the chance of publication two years ago because of the introduction of a foreword into the bargaining, so I had asked for the return of my MS. as I could not have complete control over the publication conditions.) I mentioned some 'names'.

I have to do a last section (6 or 7 pages), a dedication — Ada suggested one we had had in mind for some time — and an Author's Note. Everything looks very hopeful.

Later on I had a visit from a friend. She told us an amusing story of how her sister helped to land a big contract for some friends. A 'big shot' had to be invited to dinner as he had the disposal of the contract and he was 'a regular dead-head' — everywhere he went the dinner was a frost. In desperation the potentate was sent in with my friend's sister and the fun began at once. Sitting down at the table the young woman said, 'What colour are those cherries?' (They were Chartreuse cherries ready for the cocktails.) The question must have sounded as though she could not believe her eyes, or had already had 'one too many'. 'They're green,' he said. 'Oh, good', she replied, 'they're just the colour of my knickers!' It was drastic but most effective, for the 'dead-head' just roared.

*15th June.* When I got up this morning Mum asked me if I had thought over the required section and so I told her my idea; she approved, and I made a few notes. When Ada came in she asked the same question, so I read out my notes.

Later in the afternoon M. looked round the empty table (it was always full of my papers) and said, 'Shall we do some reading?' (of the MS. — looking for flaws). We laughed at the suggestion.

16th June. I did not get up early as I was not feeling well.

Just as dinner was served I had a drink of water and promptly fainted. I always choose a Sunday for that trick and generally at dinner time. I nearly took everyone's appetite away, but after a time I even managed to eat my own dinner. I think the fainting was due to some kind of indigestion, but I had eaten very little on Friday and Saturday. Lil was here and she looked after me.

We had some visitors from Soho. Fred, an old club boy, brought his wife over, but came chiefly to wish me luck, as he considers he is my lucky mascot. Certainly each time he comes along something happens. He took me to a music firm where I had a disagreement with the manager and still had an offer for the song in question; then he came along just before I won a criticism competition, and then he called when the book (the *Tenement*) was accepted. It is a good omen. We talked of books. He reads Oppenheim and Wallace and made an interesting comment in saying that he did not mind how incredible a story was so long as it had an air of credibility while it was being read. Surely that is the test.

He told me a ghost story concerning a relative by marriage. This man was staying in a house with a married couple (the husband was out and the wife had gone to bed) and the man was waiting up for the husband's return. There were footsteps in the passage outside, it was on the ground floor, and he called out, 'Is that you, So-and-so?' There was no reply and the steps continued. Picking up a poker, he went out to investigate and, finding no one in the passage, called upstairs to the woman, but she had heard nothing. He went to the street door and tried to open it but it would not budge, so he tried the latch, thinking the door was locked, but it remained

immovable. He went back into the room feeling a little scared; sitting down in the arm-chair he felt a strong kick from under the chair. He stood up, and heard the steps again, so he grabbed the poker. The steps approached, stopped, and the door opened. The husband was surprised to see him ready to hit the intruder with his own poker! There were some rapid questions and the man was astonished to learn that the husband had come in and had *not* found the street door locked. It was not even shut!

Fred asked me what I thought of it, so I told him of a theory, held by Admiral Mark Kerr, that something violent might have happened there and that the 'waves' were in a kind of whirlpool in the house. Fred said that the wife had seen the picture of a man cutting his throat reflected in her mirror. I did not ask him if she was watching her husband shave.

*17th June.* Lady Y called in the afternoon. She was in good form. She said that people talk of 'modern' young people, but she had seen a lot and thought that human nature was always much the same. After all, 'modern' is a silly word — it means contemporary, if it means anything and human nature is perennial. My own grandmother was very 'modern' in the 1935 sense when she was young.

*18th June.* Wrote a few letters. I find I have one or two from Christmas still to answer. I cannot begin to write the last section yet. I have a peculiar fear that I might receive a refusal when in the middle of the writing.

I contented myself with elaborating the detail and the angle — which seems to be very satisfactory.

I get tired very easily, and my leg aches much more now — it goes dead in a fraction and the nerves hurt.

19th June. I cannot make myself write. I think it is because I'm worried. If the MS. is rejected it will be a hard blow and one from which I should retire gracefully — but I feel I've learnt much since I began re-writing it.

20th June. M. came to see Ada as she cannot call on Saturday and Ada is going to Worthing on Sunday morning.

Mum has a favourite calendar here, a picture in silver of a sailing ship on a black background. It fell off the wall this evening and Mum exclaimed, 'Ah! my ship's come home!' I replied, 'It looks as if *mine* has sunk', but she would not hear of it.

By the last post to-night I had a letter from the publisher; in the first line was 'definitely improved' and on the next page was the offer to publish and the terms — conditional on a satisfactory last section. It is a tremendous relief. I cannot realize that all my struggles this year have been successful; now, the last section will be easy.

Albert and Lil came in and we told them; they thought it great news and wanted to tell Fred, my mascot, but I asked them not to until the contract was signed. The terms are better than those for the *Tenement*.

It is interesting that this acceptance has come just one day before my time limit expires. If there is no election the book will be out in the autumn.

*21st June.* Wrote the author's note, dedication and the last section. When I read it out Mum, Ada and Dan approved of the ending; later on, when Alfie read it over he roared with laughter at a particularly dry remark made by 'Mary Ann' — that is a test that the humour is there, I should think. I hope the publisher likes it; I believe he will, for I am getting to see quite clearly what makes a good piece of writing, and I know that there is a depth in the last section that would have been overlooked in most instances; I do feel satisfied if I can touch a chord of human experience that has an element of the universal, and in that scene 'Mary Ann' certainly rings true.

*22nd June.* Feeling that most of my work has been done for the time being, I began clearing out my papers and tearing up letters and other matter continually for hours. By the time I had finished I was sitting in a pile of torn papers and my fingers and thumbs were quite sore.

It was hot to-day — the first real summer day — not considering Jubilee Day which, I'm sure all good patriots will agree, was exceptional, and obviously due to Divine intervention — just one instance of the aptness of our Anthem!

Father H. came in to-day and we were talking for half an hour before I thought to mention the book. I seem to



be so relieved that I don't want to talk about it. I must be very tired, and I'm certainly showing signs of wear and tear — my suit is slack upon me and it used to be tight.

*23rd June.* We managed to get Alfie out of bed in time to take Ada to Victoria to catch the 10.25 to Worthing. He had to run for it in the end. It is very hot to-day. Mum sat by the door and I in a wheel chair under the balcony while we waited for M. We stayed outside until it was cooler and had a late tea.

We did our Bible study, and one or two questions were very interesting. There was one on 'Before Abraham was, I Am' and 'before the foundation of the world' in which we had to consider the 'timeless element' in Jesus. My reply was based on the difference between thought in eternal terms and thought in Time. 'Before Abraham was, I Am' is the remark of a personality, but it could exist as an idea in terms of Eternity. Creation as an act is an event in time, and an Eternal Creator in His omniscience must foresee all possibilities in Time, just as a champion player at billiards can tell everything that can happen and will happen in given circumstances on a billiard table; therefore the personality of Jesus was foreseen before Abraham was born, and also before the foundation of the world. I mentioned a phrase that I cannot place at once, 'One and the same nature with God the Father', to explain the 'timeless element' in Jesus — in the same way that we know the nature of a man by his ideas. M. said after a while that she could easily accept that kind of statement, but she found difficulty in ideas like the Virgin Birth (which is, humanly speaking, a series of miraculous events all postulated with the inten-

tion of preserving virginity inviolate before and after conception and birth), but I made her smile by pointing out that the V.B. was child's play compared with the statement 'One and the same nature etc.' which she *could* accept. She made a point then that is the root of faith; she said that to be a Catholic she would have to surrender her judgment, or rather her inability to judge, to the authority of the Church. After all, if belief in Eternity is accepted, every other question founders; for it deprives human reason of its power to judge a thing it is incapable of understanding in full. Furthermore, the acceptance of Eternity is the acknowledgment of God and Authority; philosophy follows those three ideas. The timeless element in Jesus is the link between the Creation, Eternity and Time. God exists; then there is His thought and foreknowledge of the results of Creation, and omniscient thought foresees the projection of itself into the sphere of Time in the personality of Jesus. A very complete philosophy, and who can say that the Truth is different — or in how much Reality, if it differs, invalidates the philosophy? Argument is always over straws; in creating a God for ourselves we cut the ground of objection from under our own feet — and a greater God may still be in His heaven — content that He has the last word!

24<sup>th</sup> June. Went out with Paddie to the park. He came in and asked me to go and, though I had no socks on, I went; after all, I did not invent socks. It was extremely hot, and he pushed me all round Hyde Park. He finally agreed to sit and rest, so we made our way to the café and had lemonade and ices; he thought I was a spendthrift, which shows how prolonged unemployment

affects people — I only spent eightpence! I heard a typical Jew talking. 'Ven I get a job I vill veer first class clothes. Dis is good enough for lying about in the park. I've got first rate clothes, but vy veer dem? Ven I get a job it vill be different!' I looked at the poor chap; he was a middle aged man who possibly may never work again.

*25th June.* A very unfortunate experience to-day — for Alfie and an acquaintance. Alfie had been too late to pay in his C.O.D. money overnight and carried it with him on his round all one day. He also took an acquaintance who was out of work. When going through his money, Alfie found he was a pound short, and waiting till he came home he spoke to us about it. We made Alfie bring in the fellow who had gone with him, told him about the pound and told him also he had taken it. All he would answer was that he 'Didn't understand'. I soon made him see what I meant. Then he suggested Alfie might have lost the money. I said he took it when he thought of that as an excuse, then he told one or two lies. Fortunately, young Paddie had told us he had seen the fellow change a shilling; the chap said he had only had sevenpence. He made that mistake quite soon, and when I noticed his lies I 'took him to pieces', as it were. I said that he made a mistake in only taking a pound; he should have taken the lot, and in taking the lot he should also have taken the coat. Then I said that he had not robbed Alfie but the firm, and when Alfie paid in a pound short he would say what had happened, and the police would do the rest. That crumpled him, and he said he had taken the money. He promised to pay it back — and he will; he has a wireless set to sell. The family calls me lawyer Thomas. It

is strange, but when I was young — just before I left school, I wanted to be a lawyer, and I habitually memorized all the legal queries and answers in the weekly papers. In that way I was soon an expert in the Rent Restrictions Act which was puzzling many poor people at the time. I used to answer questions and say where I read the information. During those years it was a habit in the family for everyone to say 'Tell George. He'll remember', or 'Ask George; he might know'. I had a good memory before the years of indoor life took the edge off.

I signed the publication agreement and wrote a paragraph, on request, for the announcements. 'Blurb' writing is difficult; one has to be fair. In the end I left the biographical detail to the publisher.

*26th June.* Wrote a dozen letters telling friends the good news. I think it will surprise a few. I wonder how often it happens that people in my position have a second book published. It is a strange feeling to be setting out to meet all other writers on level terms in a competitive market.

*27th June.* Mrs. C. came; she was presented at Court this week. She was lucky to get a good view of the proceedings. She was dressed in powder blue with a blue velvet train. As the Queen passed she saw her medal, one cannot help seeing Mrs. C., and Her Majesty smiled — which must have given a particular thrill to everyone in the line of vision. Then she told us of Princess Margaret Rose at the wedding of the Duke of Kent. The princess discovered a game — putting the

strewn rose petals down people's backs — in which she was aided and abetted by King George who helped by linking up stray petals with a glance at an inviting back! I can quite believe that, for I heard an amusing story from Windsor Castle. One tea time the butler dropped a cup in the presence of the King, Queen and a Knight. His Majesty smiled and said, 'Go on; break up the happy home!'

*28th June.* Young Paddie came and took me out again.

I wanted to go down a main street — just to look at the shops — as I had not been along that street before. It was quite pleasant. I saw a book shop, but nearly all the books were either cheap editions of D. H. Lawrence, expensive copies of Havelock Ellis, or birth-control and nudist publications; the only thing missing was 'rude postcards'. It was the first time I had really examined a bookshop window — but perhaps I chose an unfortunate locality.

We went to St. James's Park and sat there for some time, returning home past the Palace.

*29th June.* Mr. D. came along in his car. I was sitting at the door and saw him arrive, so I knew we were going out for a drive. He went in for Dan, and we took young Paddie with us. Along the Embankment and on till we came to the centre court at Wimbledon; we saw the people walking about at the back. Then we went to Richmond Park; it was a lovely afternoon. On the way home we passed Barnes Reservoir and Mr. D. said that when it was cleared out, years ago, three dead bodies were found in it. Filter systems are useful!

30th June. While Dad and Alfie were cooking the dinner (Dan had gone to Mass) I heard them talking; then Alfie said in reply to something I had not caught, 'That's your opinion. It's the opinion of a father — and it doesn't count!' That is conclusive — whatever the subject.

Sat at the door for some time this afternoon; I am getting to like more, and fresher, air. I shall grudge waiting for my holiday to come along; I hate the idea of wishing the days would pass, but it is awfully difficult not to wish it when there is sunshine and fresh air, with complete relaxation, in view. It is a thing I have not been prone to, even when hating the day that is; I have, I think, always been conscious of life as a special gift.

Father H. called to make arrangements for his monthly visit to-morrow. He told me that the boy who takes Dan to Mass said to him, 'Father, I think those people are very fortunate.' — 'Yes, of course, they are'. — 'Fancy being asked by God to bear all that!' The young fellow lives in a hostel but he has Catholic ideas worthy of the Vatican. It is the 'Crucified with Christ' idea that he has so clearly grasped.

1st July. Fr. H. had to come earlier because of another appointment; he was in his usual bright mood but did not vocalize as he prepared our breakfast.

I wrote a few more letters to-day to finish off those I owed, including one to Mrs. G. who is to give Dan a holiday if he goes on Wednesday so as to get a stay of two weeks. Ada can have three weeks there from the 10th of the month. They have a nice garden.

2nd July. Lil came to buy me a suit — which I have waited for since early in the year. Mrs. B. also called; she had her copy of the *Tenement* for me to autograph. She brought a fine bouquet of carnations and a small pink flower which looked lovely when arranged with fern. Mrs. B. wanted to hear all the news of the book and expected to find me greatly excited. I may get excited later on, when I am quite well after my holiday. At present the relief is so great that I am unable to feel anything. I just sit and wait for something to happen.

3rd July. Dan went off for his holiday. We are fortunate in having young Paddie coming in so much; he has helped Dan cook this week and has been useful. He is surprisingly sensitive and will not take anything for what he does.

Albert took Dan to the railway station in a taxi. Dan looked very smart in a light grey suit, and he left all the talking to Albert, who gave special instructions to the guard about Dan being met at the other end, to which the guard replied with a question, 'Can't he talk, then?' Albert had picked up Dan in his arms to place him in the carriage. Albert replied, 'Yes, he can talk all right, but his legs are not so good. If he could walk as well as he can talk, he'd race this train!'

4th July. In a letter from Ada she mentions a talk with a man who walked into her room, sat down on her bed and began asking questions about G.B.S. 'Had she listened to him? What did she think about him? Did he write books? *Who was he?*' There must be some-

thing wrong; perhaps Mr. Shaw does not get himself talked about enough.

I sat at the door watching the countless children playing about. There is one child, very poorly dressed, very young, who plays all day with an old house broom that is completely worn out and hairless; he is about three years old and he sweeps continually; his dust-cart is part of an old toy pram without wheels or handle, and he drags it around behind him by hooking the end of the broom over the edge. He is slightly bandy, and perfectly content. His little sister is equally grimy and has a most comical face — it will be a tragedy if it does not improve as she grows older.

Lady Y called. I showed her the publication agreement and she was pleased and interested. She often looked up smiling at Mum; she was obviously thinking of the pleasure Mum had in my achievement.

*5th July.* We have had a cooked dinner every day — thanks to young Paddie, and in a lesser degree to Dad, who has had his holiday this week and has dodged most of the work he does indoors!

I sat at the door again this evening till rather late, and had a chat with one of Dan's friends. We were joined by a Communist friend of his, who was entirely devoid of thought except class hatred. After a while he mentioned a religious problem of his own — after the 'ruddy bolshevik' had gone. He said he lay awake wondering what would happen if his heart suddenly stopped beating. He believed in immortality, but thought that God had no influence in this life, or there would be no pain, or evil. I said that if he thought there was a lot of evil in the



world, what should surprise him was that there was not *more* — if God had no influence here; and also that he should be amazed not at the small amount of good but that there was obviously so much. We agreed that human nature was surprisingly good, and I suggested that his worry was not due to his failings but his goodness; if he took up his religious practices again he would not worry about death. He laughed at a home truth. Mum wanted me to tell her what we had been talking about; she was listening and calling me 'Father Thomas' while we were talking.

*6th July.* To-day Father H. arranged to bring a friend — a Mr. K. I sat at the door again but found it too draughty so went in and read.

Mr. K. is rather amusing. He mentioned writing and said he kept a diary, and told me the important things one should put in: I offered to lend him a copy of *Barbellion's Journal* as he had not read it. He likes Parson Woodforde's diary which he ranked second to Pepys. He said he liked my *Tenement* and thought it fortunate that I am able to write. I told him the *Tenement* was an actual diary, and I think he was very surprised.

Father H. took him along to see Mum and also to introduce Dad — in the scullery. The priest said that Dad was a countryman of his (Cornwall) and Mr. K. asked him if he knew a certain place. There were great laughs when Dad said he knew nothing at all about Cornwall. His mother came from Helston, and went home to her parents for each new baby. Dad, of course, was not particularly interested in his countrymen at that age.

Lil and Albert came over to pack my case and see me

to the train in the morning; they played a record of Bing Crosby singing 'Down by the River'. Young Paddie showed some critical ability in remarking, 'He ought to have fell in and got drowned'.

*7th July.* I rose at 9.30 a.m., and Albert, who had stayed overnight, helped me to get ready to catch the 10.25 to Worthing. We took some time and when I had had breakfast we found that we would probably be late. As a last resort, Albert got Alfie out of bed and hurried him off down the road to Victoria, to get the ticket and a permit to travel in the guard's van. Alfie seemed to know he would have a queue to deal with and said we would miss the train — he just confidently took it for granted.

Albert and I arrived at the station with five minutes to spare; he found the platform, took me past the ticket collector, and the guard helped me aboard by taking the front wheels of my chair. He put me out of the draught from the windows and placed small sandbags between the chair wheels to prevent it running all over the van, as the perambulators do if they are not fixed between travelling cases. I saw Albert now and again searching the crowd for Alfie and his face was very red. I realized that Alfie not only has confidence but also knowledge of railway stations, and also that he should have obtained my ticket and permit earlier in the week; but as he had refused to do that for Ada, I did not try to force him. The train moved off and I wondered whether to tell the guard about the missed ticket, but on thinking it over I realized I could get through without any difficulty, as Alfie would buy the ticket and get the permit in any case. It was an easy journey down.

Waiting for someone to meet me at Worthing, I was told by an official who held an S.R. telegram in his hand that the stationmaster at Victoria would send my return ticket and permit to my 'local address', and the man was not clear what that meant. I said I lived near the station at Victoria. It seems that the message was sent through to assure me that everything would be all right — a most considerate action. I shall send the stationmaster a card of thanks — possibly one with a view of a railway station — if such a card exists.

Mike met me; he is the chap who wanted to know if G.B.S. wrote books. He is tall, strong and talks Irish-wise; he is keen on books — talked of Wells and others on the way home.

I had dinner with Ada and M. Afterwards I showed Ada the book contract which she read carefully. Ada left for home and was seen off by the whole household, while I was lying down and reading *The Old Wives' Tale*.

We went to see Billy Cotton's Band at the Pavilion; 'see' is the correct word, for one cannot get away from the blare and tear of jazz. The antics were surprising and the comedy element was supposed to amuse. All kinds of tricks, including some behaviour that is not exactly Sunday evening stuff — posturing posteriors, 'raspberries' and the like, including an occasional kick in the pants for someone, and sham quarrels among the band members. There were two fairly good crooners and an imitation of Louis Armstrong. The true comedy, however, was quite slick and effective. I shall not go to see a jazz entertainment again — once is enough.

A good start to my holiday.

*8th July.* After breakfast M. went off sun-bathing until midday. It takes me a long time to wash, shave and dress, so I shall only go out after dinner or in the evenings. We sat in the garden during the afternoon. Mike came and started a discussion on religion. It was not the trying experience I was afraid it might be — judging from his question about G.B.S. which Ada mentioned in a letter.

Miss Ivory, one of the permanent patients here, went out by herself twice to-day; she is ninety-five and very active and independent, tall, grey and straight-backed. M. says the old lady possesses the sauciest eye she has ever seen, and the remark reminded me that Miss Ivory is very like the late Marie Dressler.

In the evening we went to the band, a new one, but it was very third rate; I thought it might be a small cinema band putting in a busman's holiday. The tenor on the same programme, whom I have heard on the wireless, was rather good, but sang the wrong kind of songs: 'One Night in Napoli', 'Mexican Serenade' and 'Blue Eyes'. The last was the best received. The microphone went wrong for the band's crooner and we did not hear a sound — thank goodness.

*9th July.* M. goes sun-bathing on the beach every morning. We spent the afternoon on the sea front; a mist hid the Seven Sisters, shading the blue sky with grey mistiness into the green and blue of the sea. It was hot and very calm; there are not many people in Worthing at present, but we saw a few bathers.

We heard about one of Mike's jobs this evening, a house job with a doctor's family; but it did not last long.

Poor Mike has a habit of using Christian names even towards his employers. The people were very kind about it but naturally insisted that he should address them properly when other people were about. Mike strove hard, but one day broke down very badly just as a visitor was announced. He went out and said to the lady who had called to see the wife, 'Come in, dear. I won't half catch it for calling the old dutch "duck".'

That, alas, was the end for Mike.

M. and I spent the evening on the pier. The sky and sea were a Cambridge blue and there was a peculiar darker design in the water. We saw an old couple next to us, and they were as affectionate as only such people can be in public. A youth came swimming from the shore. He had a good muscular development and swam right out to dive from the pier steps at the end, then he saw some driftwood. It was very small wood but it kept him afloat with a minimum of effort.

*10th July.* Had a letter from Ada. There was no one at the station to meet her, so the guard had to push her chair and her bag 'about a mile' along the platform. Young Paddie was standing like Napoleon, behind the barrier, with his arms folded and the most expressionless face Ada had ever seen in her life. He said they would not let him in without a ticket, and he either did not know what kind of a ticket or else did not have a penny to his name. When home, the place was suddenly filled with visitors who came with Fred (my mascot) and his wife. They brought a batch of Bing Crosby records and played them until Mum got rid of the crowd at about 12.15 a.m.

Miss Ivory has been seeing things. She mystified nurse by complaining of a phenomenon constantly observed by herself alone. She asked continually if there was anything in the papers about the pink sky she could see, and remarked that she had never before seen anything like it in her 95 years. Nurse thought the matter should be investigated as she already had one other patient who was mental at times, and after a while it was discovered that building was in progress between the house and our view of the Downs, and was developing into a large mass of red tiles.

11th July. Received a letter from an acquaintance who followed us home last night and who would not speak to me as I was escorted by an 'austere looking gentleman' (Mike). Nurse forbids me to mention that to Mike as he has enough conceits already. We went to the pier and Mike came on with us; we were also followed by the dog from next door, who has attached himself to this house as he is jealous of the new baby there which is getting all the petting. On the pier we were asked if the dog were ours; we casuistically denied ownership, but that it followed us on. The ticket-man and the dog engaged in a diversion and the dog bolted for the entrance; it had obviously been chased off before. Mike strolled away and in a few minutes came back to mention a steamer which was taking trippers from the end of the pier; as he mentioned a girl in the same breath we told him to go. He went — the Don Juan.

Nurse went to the Fair here in aid of Worthing Hospital for which it is hoped to collect fifteen thousand pounds — an impossibility, I should think. I cannot imagine a sea-side town capable of such generosity over a period of only three days.

Dave came to see me. He used to be a boarder here and is good company for a limited period. He told us a tale of a woman spiritualist in the town. Dave has a shop and some vacant rooms and 'letting' them was mentioned. As though she had questioned an Oracle the woman, with a fixed look, informed him that he *would* 'let'. Then the woman waved each arm outwards, windmill fashion, and gave an impromptu séance. She did not like his neighbours and warned him of them. Then she told Dave that his wife wanted him to forgive her, and that he had four children, and he would forgive. Laughing uproariously, Dave explained how he had brought the woman out of her trance with an exclamation at the news of his non-existent children. He had brought us some freshly caught plaice for breakfast.

12th July. This evening M. and I went to a show at the Literary Institute, which was called *Screamline Follies*. Once inside we realized the aptness of the title — the screamlines were outside the hall. 'This way to the brightest show on the South Coast' (they conveniently forgot Brighton Pier when lit up), and the follies were all on the side of the paying audience. About forty people were present, but we had value for money — almost. We paid sixpence each and a penny for the programme. The brightest line was the gag that 'O.K. Chief' was the father of 'O.K. Baby'.

Mike did not come into the show as he had an appointment with a 'lonely girl from London'. His regular girl may be down to see him this week end, but he has a soft and impressionable heart, and cannot resist the company of a *lonely* girl.

13<sup>th</sup> July. I found the courage to-day to sun-bathe in the garden on a mattress with a sheet as protection for my tender skin. I spent three hours out there and was laughed at by M. for my style of sun-bathing — she can take any amount of direct sunshine without distress. The Downs seem very near and the cultivated fields are of various colours; bronzed corn, a lighter yellow, and one field which is like a wonderful tapestry; whatever grows in the field gives me the impression of a landscape with figures in brown on a green background. I have seen shapely trees, strolling couples and sheep all in the imaginary design.

Miss E. came. She thinks *Neighbours* an excellent title, especially as it contains the element of universality. We arranged to go to their place at 4.30 on Monday to have tea in the garden with John Oxenham. M. and Mike are invited.

14<sup>th</sup> July. In the evening, a bright blue and sunny time, M. and I went along to hear Peter Dawson at the Pavilion; 'chairs' have to be early and go in from the ramp on the pier. The lady at the toll gate, dark and fierce of eye, refused to let us through until M. had bought the tickets, for which she had to queue up. At last, the Pavilion attendant, who is responsible for the safe passage of chairs up the ramp, beckoned us round and M. had to leave the queue to explain to the fierce-eyed lady. We were let through, and, try as I might, I could not hold my breath long enough so as not to breathe the air on the pier for which I had not paid.

As I sat in the Pavilion, more than half an hour too soon for the performance, I could see through the large



windows the blue and gold of the evening, and it looked very cool from where I sat, a view most pleasing. The orchestra of eight was surprisingly well finished, and played smoothly and delicately. When Peter Dawson came out he was well and encouragingly received. His first effort, a Bach recitative and aria, was very nice, but his voice was not properly under control for three or four notes, perhaps that was due to the nature of the recitative. After that he was splendid. I was amused at the clapping and the encore ritual which was religiously performed. From where I sat I could see the door in the wings still open and Mr. Dawson mopping his brow and neck; he was generous with his extras, but the time was not stretched to suit, so I suppose there is a set procedure about extras. The audience had a sense of fairness and clapped less when they knew he had filled in his part of the time. He spoke occasionally, and once, when the pianist had to fetch some music, 'The Mountains of Mourne', Peter Dawson raised a laugh by saying, 'He's just gone to get one' — as though it might have been a drink. We were very pleased with the whole performance. Mike met us to push the chair.

*15th July.* M., Mike and I, went to tea with John Oxenham and Miss E. in their garden. It is a well-wooded place with a good deal of character about it. The birds were numerous and jubilant, including some wood pigeons, a noisy family. There is a lawn with a path on the left, and a small orchard beyond. It is a secluded, comfortable spot, and we were enjoying the setting as well as tea and gossip. J.O. read my agreement right through, a very thorough procedure which showed a

lively interest, and also told us a Hitler story which is attributed to a bishop. In a German train there sat an old Jew, bent and silent; a Nazi entered and exclaimed 'Heil Hitler', then sat down. The old Jew still gazed downwards in his bent attitude of humility. Another Nazi entered and with hand raised said 'Heil Hitler', and still no movement from the Jew. The two Nazis got out of the train at the next stop. They stood by the carriage door and the old Jew looked up and said to them as the train moved off, 'Thank you, gentlemen, but I am not Hitler'.

John Oxenham went indoors and came back with two books, *Bees in Amber* and *The Man Who Would Save the World*, which were autographed and given to M. and Mike respectively. Mike said that his book reminded him of Hitler and we had some fun putting the emphasis on 'would' in the title — naturally the 'would' accent applied to Hitler.

Mike is amazed at his good fortune on having a signed copy and talks of nothing else.

We went home, then on to the band to see the Scottish dancing. The 'whoops' were quite wild and one in particular roused a wire-haired terrier to reply with a good imitation each time the whoop came; the crowd buzzed and chuckled. The dancers were rather weird and devilish in the fading light.

16th July. Mike carries his copy of the book about with him, and chatters most enthusiastically. We all went on the beach in the afternoon, and a high wind and a little cloud kept us cool. Nurse, her friend and Mike bathed. When our tame Irishman wanted to dress, nurse said it would be an easy thing to take off his costume after

he had his trousers on — that satisfied Mike, so he tried to do it. After a while, with many 'Blind O'Rileys', Mike found it was not just a bathing knack but an impossibility, and nurse was terrifically amused at the error she had made; it is easy to slip a bathing costume off — from under a frock.

When we went out again later on the sea was a wonderful indigo blue, an amazingly deep colour and a sight worth seeing.

*17th July.* This morning we had to be ready early for a car drive to see the Oxenhams' new bungalow in the only time Miss E. had at her disposal. Mike lifted me, and M. also came; we took the chair so that I could be pushed round the place. We went over Ham bridge and out past Broadwater Green, Mike pointing out 'places of interest' — a village library, a flower nursery and a cemetery. He said he often stopped to admire the view of the cemetery on the hill — an appreciation of a weird kind.

We turned off the main road with its view of house-tops, into an arched leafy lane. The greenery seemed to meet overhead, a natural triumphal arch, and the lane winding on, was a sandy brown ribbon. It was a surprise to find that untouched avenue in the midst of building activities, for it seems a new estate is growing there. I recognized their bungalow from the coloured plans I had seen earlier, and was pleased with its appearance. The view is restricted at the back by pine trees, but the sea can be seen to the right; to us on this misty morning it looked like just another view of the downs. The rooms inside are a most restful colour; one has the impression of brown

wood and pale green. We were told that even the soap was chosen for the colour scheme, but on investigation in the visitors' bathroom (there are two) we found the soap was white. Miss E. exclaimed 'What a shame!' — but the bathroom is, after all, white enamel. I saw a good supply of books, about 80 crime stories, and at the other extreme (and in a different compartment specially stocked for 'Highbrows') there was Von Hugel. I saw two of Miss E.'s books and one copy of the *Tenement in Soho*, which Mike wanted to borrow; he was, however, lent another copy. M. went on to the garage roof for the view.

In the afternoon we went to a *matinée* of *Hyde Park Corner*. It was not a first class performance — it jumped, I thought, and the puzzling ending was spoken too fast for clarity.

18th July. I only went out in the evening to hear the band.

M.'s seat collapsed under her as soon as she sat in it. The chair was the upright kind and the wood was quite rotten. Later the Inspector came and was very concerned; we were thankful that it did not happen with an old or infirm person in it.

19th July. The weather changed, it became cloudy and threatened rain. I stayed in and lay down most of the time with the french window wide open, which is as good as being in the garden.

We admired the fine sunset. Later, over the line of the Downs appeared the peaks of white clouds; the effect was a perfect replica of snow-bound peaks in Switzerland.

As they grew in size they added a deceptive distance to the horizon, just as though one were actually gazing at parts of the Alps.

20th July. Another wet day. M. went out to enjoy the strong breeze, while I lay down comfortably most of the day, and in the evening M. read to me from Belloc's *The Four Men* — a pastime which nurse seems to think unusual.

21st July. To-day I should have been preparing to go home, but I am staying another week. After dinner, M. left to catch the 2.38 to town, with thoughts of the office in her mind. She says she has enjoyed her holiday, and certainly she has been the means of helping Ada and myself to enjoy ours.

When she had gone I felt rather shut in as the French window was closed; after a while nurse came and opened it and asked me if I would like to go out, though it was very windy. I thought a high wind would be just the thing to blow away the shut-in feeling so I gladly consented. It was a blustering breeze and did me good. In the evening I went to hear the band which was rather dull. It was very cold out. I was a little uncomfortable, but I liked the open air.

22nd July. I wrote home, then after dinner went out with nurse. Mike got me out and then left. There were signs of the return of a heat wave. We watched a man giving swimming lessons to children, teaching them

to float with the help of a couple of rings on a pole and rope. He occasionally let them sink, which soon brought the lesson to an end.

In the evening nurse's friend came over and asked her to go to the theatre as she had free tickets. Nurse wondered what I would do, so I offered to go also, but Mike declined — he had a girl to meet. I said I would stay in, then nurse would not go to the theatre, so Mike gave up the idea of meeting the girl, apparently, and said he would take me to the band.

Out towards the Seven Sisters there was a lavender haze that grew deeper as it went farther inland. It was an exquisite pastel shading that began with the blue of the sea. I have not before seen such an effect.

Afterwards we went to meet the people coming from the theatre. From their talk I imagined the effects were chiefly swear words and corpses.

*23rd July.* There was a heavy white mist over the Downs this morning which obscured everything.

In the afternoon Mike pushed me out, going down the road away from the town; it was rather a wilderness out there, but apparently it was the nearest way to the place where nurse bathes. Mike must have misunderstood his directions, for after a quarter of an hour's walking we were in the road which is the first turning on the right from the house. I sat on the promenade and could see the heat coming off the stones and causing the air in the line of vision to shimmer. I thought of my very youthful days when I first observed that phenomenon outside a cook-shop and gazed in wonder at it.

The sea was without a ripple, and a living stretch of

mother-of-pearl, which shaded itself into the sky through a pink horizon. An aeroplane flew extremely low over the beach, and later Mike told me that it just missed the top of the bandstand.

Mike is terribly Irish and has his own system of prefixes, preferring 'ex' to 'in' or 'un'. To-day on the placards is the news of a Worthing woman's 100th birthday. Mike thinks that Worthing is a fine place for 'longevity', and said that old Miss Ivory would one day be a 'sanitarian' the way she was getting on. He uses the best crop of 'malapropisms' I've ever heard.

There was Community Singing at the bandstand to-night. It was crowded when we arrived and I heard that 2300 people were in the enclosure, so we stayed outside with the rest of Worthing. People either cannot, or will not sing, and everyone except the children and the local lads were almost mute. I sat next to an old lady who could not hear the songs but who wanted to know the name of each item. I obliged until her relatives came along.

*24th July.* It was very hot in the garden this morning sun-bathing. I turned my back to Phoebus, and made the merest acquaintance with numerous ants, beetles and other insects with and without wings.

Went on the beach this afternoon with Mike. In front of us reclined a young woman who had a baby in a perambulator. I thought her rather young, then to my surprise a boy of about twelve and a much older girl came from bathing and called the young woman 'Mother'.

Mike nearly got a job yesterday, and to-day he was supposed to go after another at an hotel. I wondered when

he was going, and about half-past four he sat up on the beach and remembered the appointment. He went, and is to see the manager before 10 to-morrow morning. I shall see if he forgets again.

Coming home he mispronounced a word and nurse laughed at him. He said that just because everyone else had their idea of how to say their words it was no reason why he should imitate them. I have seen a resemblance to his ideas and those of G.B.S., only the wit and learning is absent. His objection is that as nobody pronounces English as it is written, he refuses to adopt everyone else's pronunciation. There is a strange logic about his reasoning which is rather like the Shavian habit of standing every thing on its head.

*25th July.* This afternoon Mike and Nurse went for a bathe and I watched them from the promenade where I sat in a public seat for a change. The greater freedom allowed by the large seat enabled me to free myself of the various aches that assail me in a confined sitting position. With my legs out on part of the wheel chair I rested easily for a time. A man came and sat at the other end of the seat and at once began a conversation in a rather cultured voice. He was a qualified chemist whose shop had been ruined by the war — I received the impression that it was war service that forced him to dispose of the shop. (Old Dave, who came to see me the other night and told the spiritualist tale, was ruined in similar circumstances; when he had to join up he was employing fifteen men in his tailoring business.) This chemist had travelled extensively, mostly in the tropics, and he said that white people always get some trouble or other from



sojourning there. He had not had malaria or anything like that, but he had a skin disease on his arms and shoulders that forced him to live in the open as much as possible. He had a motor bike to go about on. I said that we were a good contrast as I had lived an indoor life completely since I was sixteen. He smiled sympathetically and said I had great patience, to which I replied that it is self-defence to make the best of things. He said that human nature was the most adaptable thing in the world, and made the remark seem profound, as though he had observed the fact from experiences as wide and varied as his travels.

He pointed to a woman on the beach and passed an appreciative remark; she had a fine figure and striking blonde hair. (I looked for Mike, who was somewhere near, and a few minutes afterwards I noticed that he had, with the help of Bob, the dog, scraped an acquaintance with the rather reserved looking woman.) When the man left he wished me all the patience in the world.

Later on Nurse pulled Mike's leg about the blonde, and he said that she had 'given him the office'. Mike is a great lady-killer.

We went to a cinema after tea and saw *Devils on Wheels* (motor racing and much crookedness). The film was one of the 'breathless excitement' kind, for a young couple in front were thrilled, and the young woman palpitated and danced in her seat, which amused me far more than the films.

26th July. In the afternoon we decided to have tea at the café in Beach House Gardens, so Mike took me there to watch the bowls and tennis.

There is something about bowls, but I suppose that it is a game for old people or introverts; there is so much time for thinking that the excitement must be subdued or mental. I watched a couple of men playing on their own, what one of the players, who refused to be shaken from his absorption called 'a needle game'. He was a foreigner and he trotted after each wood he sent down looking most comical from the back, bobbing heels and east-and-west knees. He gesticulated to the wood in transit if it seemed about to run wide. He was a small, sallow man and wore his panama hat down near his ears. I did not understand much of what he said, but to a green keeper, who spoke of a club game, he emphatically claimed a walk-over if his opponent was not on the green by a certain time that evening. Bowls is as serious a business as the Stock Exchange. I saw one very good throw. The foreign man's opponent sent down a wood that obviously went where it was meant to go. Slowly it rolled towards us, gradually swerving inwards to pass between two stationary woods, which were less than a foot apart, to rest nearer the white ball. The onlookers clapped.

We had tea and Mike had a talk with the pretty waitress. Nurse mentioned another waitress who, elsewhere, is held in high esteem and they agreed she was 'sweet'. Mike was very interested until he found out she had a regular chap.

*27th July.* It was much too windy to go to the band; we waited for nurse outside the enclosure, and Mike placed me so he could point out a lovely girl, the like of whom he had never before seen, so he said. She was beautiful, and was without a trace of powder or lip-

stick. I felt sorry for Mike in that the girl was with her father. When nurse came she too was shown the girl, and she asked, 'Did she give you the office, Mike?' After that we went along to West Worthing, a distinction and a difference. The promenade is quite expensively different and the big houses are in the West part of the town. However, even in ordinary Worthing they are particular. I noticed an old weather-beaten name plate for a side turning and under it was another new sign bearing the word 'Unadopted'. It was something or other Lane — not quite 'Smith' as they say in 'Orphan Island'. Building has begun in the lane, so the Council must make it a 'road' or an 'avenue'.

*28th July.* We were in plenty of time at the railway station but were taken to the wrong platform by a railway official, but I noticed it in time. They had to move the train up to get me into the last guard's van. He was a kindly, grey-haired man. The tail-wag on the van shot my chair across till I was behind the guard's chair at his periscope and table. He put me back, but the chair would not remain fixed.

I was met at Victoria by Alfie.

Later I felt very sick. I was ill three years ago after travelling home in the guard's van and for a while I thought it was going to happen again.

*29th July.* I could look at no food this morning but dry bread and could not eat anything all day. I was glad to go to bed.

30th *July*. Felt all right to-day, but am still fancying only dry bread.

Mrs. B. came this afternoon specially to bring flowers for Ada's return to-morrow. We talked chiefly about ailments, which, after all, can be described as a sympathetic discussion. Mrs. B. is going for her holiday next week.

Mum received a table-tray to-day. She does not know who it is from, and until she read the postmark she could not even guess. It is probably from Mrs. G. who has Ada staying with her. The tray is just the thing; Mum can read, lean or eat on it.

31st *July*. Ada is home again, looks very well, and is more animated in her talk. She told us that Mrs. G. said she was too quiet and unsociable, but no one would guess it from her manner now; she even laughs at the memory of Mrs. G.'s criticism. But Ada is rather a quiet person; she sits and watches and then, when one scarcely expects it, she passes a remark or two that generally hits a nail on the head, or to use a cricketing term, 'hits someone for six'. She may even appear unsociable, but we do not find her so.

1st *August*. There has been a good deal of talking done to-day, chiefly between Ada and Mum, with occasional spasms from Dan and myself. Mum, of course, wanted to know everything that was said or done over the period of three weeks during Ada's stay. There was no trace of the dumbness attributed to Ada by Mrs. G., but Mum made us smile with a recollection from Ada's babyhood. In those days Mum worked with Grannie

who was a tailoress, and Ada had to be kept near. Every now and then Grannie would say, 'Pick that child up and see if she's dumb,' as Ada would lie quietly for hours gazing at the ceiling or the walls, or perhaps wondering where the large object was whose presence was so satisfying at certain times. Mum added, 'You were dumb enough at times — but when you did start ...' Then Mum told Ada that she had gone out on the previous Saturday hoping to go to a cinema, but when she got there it was too late for admission as chairs were not allowed in after 2.30. Ada was surprised, and said, 'You'll be going away for a holiday one of these days', and strangely enough Mum did not reject the idea. I was very surprised when I learned of the excursion; it is the first time for sixteen years or more since Mum went out of doors, except for the two removals. Mum said she was ready at 11.30, but Alfie was late home from work, so she said to him, 'Hurry up. Are you waiting for my beard to grow?'

*2nd August.* There is a species of class war on this estate.

Since the people were brought in from a slum (when a whole street was demolished) the tone of the estate has dropped considerably — so say the middle working-class people, and every bad thing is blamed on 'Them from Ross Street'.

This afternoon we saw some of the children in a quarrel: one child, a boy of eight or so, hit another boy with a heavy stick and made him cry. They walked on near one another as though the matter were forgotten, then suddenly the boy who had been struck saw a plank that had been sawn into smaller pieces; he picked up the largest

piece, which was about two feet in length, and calmly hit the other boy over the head with such force that the piece of plank broke in half down the centre. The stricken boy just stood and gazed for a second, probably wondering what had happened, and then burst into tears. The other boy said, 'I'll give yer, hitting me'. Apparently the children of to-day are 'tough guys'.

There are at least four grades of society on this estate: (1) The 'Rossites' — the lowest grade (according to the other three sets) than whom nothing could be lower. (2) The 'You-Emma-wait-till-I-get-me-'ands-on-ye'r' type (really the hard-worked women with large families and lots of small children); these are a noisy section who quarrel over each other's children, with the estate porters as minor Solomons. (3) The 'grown-up-family' type who from their superior years have seemingly forgotten that their children were ever young, and who consequently think that the estate is encumbered with other people's troublesome children. This type can be surprisingly intolerant. (4) The type that pretends not to know they are living on a working class estate; the aristocrats whose door is never opened to canvassers (as though a warning 'Nothing bought at the door' were invisibly prominent over the door-knocker) and whose work is never mentioned — they might be bankers, politicians (or burglars) for all they show of their employment. I suspect it is generally a beautiful daughter or two that brings about this superiority feeling, for the daughters never, never, never, show the least sign of recognizing a male on the estate, though they may be seen meeting a guardsman elsewhere. To make the list complete I should mention another type — the Thomas family — who disguise themselves pretty well in all grades of the estate society.

3rd August. To-day we had the amazing spectacle of Mum going to a cinema. She is a different person; and with surprising energy and forcefulness ordered the household about until she was safely launched in her going-out chair. Alfie lifted her, by himself, fairly easily — he must be very strong as Mum looks large in the chair. She was beaming as she went out.

When M. came the first thing she noticed was the emptiness of the room, and on her remarking upon it Ada replied, 'Yes, but look at the size of the vacant chair'. (Mum's divan, which takes up a large portion of one part of the room.) The emptiness was strange, it affected us and we were more than usually quiet.

Later, when Mum came back, there was a great chattering, films, films, films. She thinks it is wonderful. There was no shortage of talk for the rest of the day.

One of our minor Solomons (a porter) was in hot water to-day because of some cold water. One family with several small children would not keep the young ones off what was left of the garden, from which the children threw mud at each other and at anyone near at hand. The porter, who has to keep the place tidy among other duties, objected and was verbally assailed by both parents. However, he ordered the children off the patch of earth. When they were indoors he put the hose on 'the garden' until it was drenched and muddy. The children came out all nicely dressed and promptly went on the garden again. The porter did not object, and they threw the mud about — until their mothers saw them — then strangely enough both parents went and quarrelled with the porter for *not* turning the children off the garden. Truly, Solomon in all his glory was not *arraigned* like one of these — porters.

One item that Mum mentioned amused us. When Alfie was pushing her home she heard someone whistling from down the street and she recognized the sound. She said, 'Alfie, stop a minute, there's your father whistling "Pretty, pretty".' Alfie, who knew nothing about 'Pretty, pretty', would not listen and walked faster, being in a hurry to get home for tea. At last he did stop and Dad came up to them. It was Grannie who first gave the name to Dad's whistle, and with an old woman's humour used to say to Mum, 'There's "Pretty" come for you'. When Alfie understood about the whistle he just roared with laughter.

*4th August.* Alfie went fishing to-day with a friend, who also took his girl with them on the pillion. Alfie rode his push-bike to Iver and was able to get there fairly quickly. In the afternoon he came home for a tent as they were going to stay there through the night. They had made friends with other anglers and the girl friend was going to camp with other girls there.

Mum has been telling us parts of the films she can remember and it is very amusing to watch her obviously still thrilling under the experience of her first talkies. She chuckles wonderfully over the comedies she describes, and her chuckle has to be heard to be appreciated. As many people have said — we have a 'Wonderful Mum'.

Father H. came in to see us after returning from his holiday. He seemed very pleased about the acceptance of the book and said several times that it was rather a great thing to have done. He is extremely pleased that I have been able to do it, and I suppose it is a relief to him to know that all my strain has been to some purpose.



*5th August.* A very hot day and I suffered a good deal of heat exhaustion, which seems to affect my breathing most. I just lay back in my chair completely disgruntled. Every few minutes, it seemed, Mum thought of a little more of the films, so now we have a vague impression of a comic film which continually gets tangled up with a serious one as we listen to bits from each.

When Alfie came home from camping he proudly showed us their catch — two small fish that remain unidentified despite the combined experience of three local anglers: I suspect that catches have been so few that, out of water, the fish are unrecognizable.

I went to bed early and found a good deal of relief in lying down. However, this being a Bank Holiday, one can be thankful for hot weather.

*6th August.* This morning Mum thought she would eat the fish Alfie caught, for breakfast, so Dan boiled them for her. She took one taste and spluttered as though she were poisoned. 'Uh, mud!' she exclaimed, and called for some water to rinse her mouth. When Alfie came in for dinner she told him the fish were bad, and he sat and shook with laughing. Then he explained that one had been caught on Sunday and that the other had been swamped in petrol from a leak in the tank on the motor bike. It was too much for us, and we all laughed — including Mum.

M. came this evening. The wireless was going — an alleged variety, and we all sat and listened painfully polite, each refusing to be the first to object, partly because we could not tell who amongst us wanted to listen. We got over the difficulty by having tea; that brought us

to the table and we ignored the B.B.C. and its summer entertainment.

*7th August.* Had an appointment this afternoon with a young journalist brought by Father H. He remembered the *Tenement* and said it was well received, so I showed him the book of reviews and he said they were as good a collection as any first book could get. He told me an amusing story about the first book review he ever wrote. He took it to Robert Lynd, his chief, whose comment was, 'A nice little essay. Do it again, and mention something about the book!' Doubtless good advice on book reviewing.

*8th August.* I heard a story of the youths and young men who congregate round the gates here. One Monday a group were rather noisy, the ringleader, a loud and foul-mouthed fellow of eighteen or so, dressed in a new tight-fitting suit and resplendent in a new green trilby, was particularly objectionable, and refused to quieten or go away from under someone's window when requested. They talked of women and such 'manly' items irrespective of who could hear, but suddenly the group was dispersed by another form of persuasion; a window opened and the contents of a water pail — very well directed — fell amongst them. Now the tight-fitting suit fits a little tighter, and the green hat is much less jaunty.

*9th August.* The proof copy of *Neighbours* came to-day by registered post. It looks splendid in print. The amount of difference and dignity there is between writing,

or even typing, and cold print is surprising. I have read parts of the story at random, a severe test, and it shows itself capable of holding a reader's interest anywhere. At least, that is what I think.

When the milkman came to collect his bottles Dan, who is always ready for some fun, showed him the proof and said 'Look at this, Milkie; and he was brought up on your milk!' The milkman looked and asked 'Sterilized?' (he serves us with two kinds of milk). 'No, paralysed', replied Dan. Apparently Dan was intent on making a skit on advertisements — for which he must be excused, and let off with a caution.

*10th August.* The house was nearly turned upside down, as it were, by Mum's forcefulness. It seemed that she would be late for the cinema as no one attempted to get up to help her dress. Dan was up last and went through the verbal mill, and I heard Ada speaking up for herself when her turn came. When Alfie came home, already tired from a hard morning's work, I warned him not to be late with Mum at the cinema as she had been looking forward to seeing 'Bright Eyes' (Shirley Temple) all the week. With a special effort he got her there just in time.

M. came and was very interested in the proof, reading parts she had specially liked and also those parts she had not seen.

Mr. D. came along with his car, but there was no one to lift me. I sent for a friend but he was out. Finally the porter tried to carry me. He could not raise me on his back, and I nearly went on the floor as his weak ankle would not stand the strain (he had been knocked down

by a car this week). At last he carried me out in his arms, and then there was another series of accidents as he could not put me properly on the seat. It took three people to do it eventually, but I was none the worse for wear, although I landed on the floor of the car. Dan was easily managed as he is much lighter than I am. We left Ada and M. at home — in a strange peace, possibly because Dan and Mum were out of the place at the same time.

We went to Hampstead and sat on the top of the world for a while, consuming ices while we gazed at the view. It was where there is a pond for children, and there were several cars on the side from which an occasional person could be seen watching the children, doubtless with eyes only for one or two of the multitude that shouted and splashed there. On our way home we passed through Highgate Village and by the place where Priestley lives, which gave me a moment of pleasure.

Mum held the stage for the rest of the evening with innumerable bursts of chuckling recollections of 'Bright Eyes' and the comedy film. I expected her to begin crooning 'On the goo-oo-ood ship Lollipop' at any moment.

*11th August.* Mum was talking to us about her outing.

She said that it was wonderful to be going along the street. One remark was — 'Fancy having the real sun shining on me.' It must indeed have been a thrill to realize that, but it was a greater thrill to hear it, although the pathos hurt me for a minute.

Ada has a headache from a too close application of her critical faculty to the proof. She is going over it first, leaving me the job of referring to the manuscript to settle her queries. It is rather a hard task.

12th August. We had Holy Communion this morning and afterwards Father H. was in a subdued mood. He read from the *Imitation of Christ* on vanity in worldly things. A warning?

13th August. I took over the job of doing the proof correcting from Ada to-day, and found that my legs ached so much that it hindered me. One has to look at every spot of printer's ink and it is surprising how one reads and re-reads without seeing an error. I have found one or two Ada missed and doubtless she will be equally observant going over my part. Eventually I took the book into my bedroom and lay down to do the work. I could not write, but I made marks in the margin every time I made a discovery.

My mind is so concentrated on the book affairs that I am unaware of the ordinary things about me.

14th August. Proof-reading all day. Although I have read the story many times I still am unable to read with a detached, critical sense and find myself reading from interest.

This afternoon Dan dressed himself very carefully and then told me that he had arranged for a chap to call and take him to a cinema, for which I was expected to pay. Dan has missed his vocation; he has a business instinct that would pay for developing.

However, we were destined not to have our dinner interfered with as, wonder of wonders, after work Alfie stayed in for the evening and did the cooking. But when at last Dan came in for dinner he found not a vestige of anything left for him. So like dear Alfie.

We listened to a play called 'Pleasant Portion' which was very well done and a good piece of work. It was the story of a mother who ruined the lives of her two devoted daughters by her selfishness. Alfie nearly drove Mum frantic by his comments about the mother, who the *Radio Times* described as detestable, and in whom Alfie pretended to find a hundred similarities to Mum! I think he needs a good whipping; he has never had that kind of parental care and is so much the worse for it. He may never have the sense to know how lucky he is, or appreciate it. He has more freedom in this home than Dad.

15th August. Dan has been working very hard all day in the scullery, cooking and cleaning. When he did come into the living-room he said, 'If I were twins I could halve this work and finish twice as quickly!' He is much weaker but he carries on with his duties as though he were able-bodied.

Fanny, the deaf woman from the next flat, came in to-day; she likes, now and then, to have a little shout with Mum. With much laughing she told us of her adventures in waking Alfie each morning. She does some cleaning outside the house and, if she sees the milk still on the doorstep, she pushes up the window of Alfie's bedroom and calls him. He does not always take notice (he finds it rather a problem to get out of bed with such an audience) so Fanny has her own methods of coercion. She poked the cleaning mop near his face one morning; the very next day she had to threaten him with a water-pistol, one reserved for use on her own son, before he would move. The third morning she had neither mop nor pistol, so decided on something really drastic. She went to pull

the clothes off him, but discovered in the nick of time that the back she was about to uncover was Dad's! The opening window woke him, and he spared her blushes by saying that it was all right as he knew she was in the habit of waking Alfie.

16th August. When Dad came home he complained that we had made him late for work and an amusing argument followed, which was finally rounded off by Ada who said, 'Do I understand that you are accusing us of holding you back?' It made his objection look so ridiculous that he laughed with the rest of us! The idea of any of us holding anyone back by force is just too funny — especially from *work*.

We still search the proof for printer's errors: one is rather funny. I found 'doors' for 'drawers' which were being opened and shut in a room.

The publisher sent the drawing for the dust jacket to-day for my opinion as he thinks the colour scheme of black and grey is not attractive enough. It is a good drawing, rather reserved, but it is the duty of a jacket to attract and I think colour does that best. It is strange, but even human relations depend on colour, especially for purposes of attraction; hair, eyes, lips — and clothes. Colour attracts; personality holds. And that applies to book jackets — colour attracts; individual appearance of book, or personality of the author, sells the book. Sometimes the story sells itself.

17th August. Mum was eager to get ready to-day for her third venture to the cinema. When Alfie arrived he took his tea down to the other room and said

he was not going. We took no notice and continued with the preparations, then Alfie came along and stood in the doorway. Mum was very depressed for the rest of the day and by night was actually feeling sick.

Father H. brought along a young Dutch priest who is in England to improve his English during his study of English literature. We had an interesting talk. Apparently they have to do a six year course of study in the universities in Holland for a degree. He had not read the Dutch translation of the *Tenement* (called '*T Slop*') but knows the publishing firm very well. I asked him if he knew the name of a Madame de Wit who had written, and he said she was a famous writer. His remark reminded me of what the translator said about the lady. She said, 'She is much more famous as I am!'

After tea M. and I began going over the marked proof but we only had half an hour at it as the wireless was 'turned on' — like water in the scullery, but a little more interesting.

Later on, the exploration of Wookey Hole by divers was exciting. Two divers, a man and a woman, went down — the woman to pull through the air tubes for the man as he could not do it himself while crawling in some parts. The diver managed to get into a chamber that had not been entered by a human being before and he gave a description of the place — water and air. He had the pumps stopped for fifty seconds or so to allow him to speak without their noise, and it was very breath-taking to hear him say 'Hard on the pumps' and to notice the time lag before we heard the pumps go again; once he said 'Give me a drop of air!' The most exciting moment came when he penetrated the seventh chamber, and he had just sent up a message for more air when the broadcast



ended. Another minute or two would have completed the adventure for the listeners — but the B.B.C. could not spare the time taken from the dance music period. Although I am interested in dance music I had not realized that it was of such national importance as to brook no delay.

There was a wedding on the estate to-day and Dan, Alfie, M. and Ada had a good view of the people and guests going out. Dan kept up an amusing running commentary describing the colours of the dresses and the variety of people. 'Oh, they've even got a baby!' he exclaimed — knowing full well the baby was a niece of the bride. The groom's name is Brown and someone mentioned it was rather a common name. Dan replied, 'You'd marry the name, not the *wages*!'

18th August. Dear Alfie stayed in bed until dinner was served, leaving Dan to do all the cooking, as Dad, after preparing the vegetables, went to his club, 'The Rising Sun'. I noticed that Alfie got up very quickly just before Dad came in, so one must give him the credit for not wanting to be assisted out of bed. Of course, he works very hard and makes matters worse by reading late.

19th August. To-day Dad is showing a misguided interest in the domestic arrangements. He wanted to know how much milk we had left, and when told, said, 'That makes five pints, as there are two still on the box in the other room from yesterday'. Dan realized the truth first: he made our dear Papa go and bring the milk from the box and then sent him for the milk ordered

to-day. We all had a good laugh — Dad included. Just ten minutes before the incident he had taken the milk and put it on the box himself! Poor old Dad; he will never win any medals for memorizing things.

*20th August.* Had a letter from the publisher agreeing with my comments on the jacket. Brighter colours will be used.

Until this year Mum had not had much change, sitting on her bed year in and year out; now, she is seeing life. She sits at the door in a wheel-chair on hot days — and though she has only a desolated garden to gaze at, the larger space and more air is an experience for her that she enjoys. As she sat there to-day she had a moment's fun; a man was painting the next window, and Mum happened to call out to Dan about some tea. The painter answered and said, 'No fanks, missus, I've just had two cups, upstairs!'

Cousin Frank came in for a few minutes. He was pleased to learn the good news about the book. He asked me about the trouble in Abyssinia. My view is that it will be a war just to 'break the ice' so that Italy can fight someone next for the Danube territories — the real Fascist Empire. Abyssinia is just a profitable diversion. Hitler might help Austria or nibble away (rather hungrily) on his own account.

Ada and I put in some good work correcting the marked proof; it is a slow job as the printer's reader always has a few queries to make — generally rather helpful. Two bad mistakes are that the compositor did not notice two section divisions and it has spoilt the layout of two chapters. I must write to the publisher — at least to

point out the error. But, as the type was set from my handwriting, it is very good.

21st August. A very interesting letter to-day from the Dutch publisher of the *Tenement*. He wants me to let him know if I have any more books published. We are very pleased and rather amused at the Dutch-English of his typist's phrases.

I fell foul of Mum to-day and was severely put in my place. Mum worries because Albert and his wife do not come to see us, and I said they should be told to stay away; then a fond mother's wrath just burst over me and I was 'drowned' in the deluge. Poor me! Poor Mum! It will be three weeks to-morrow since she has seen her married son.

It is very hot to-day and what remained of me after Mum had finished just sagged in the heat. Temper plus temperature.

22nd August. Alfie put out our old table for the dustmen to take away. He did it some time after 1 a.m. and Mum was immediately sorry and said it was like turning a child out of home. It was part of her home furnishing when married, so has some sentimental value — for Mum. She wanted Alfie to get out of bed and bring it back again. He did not hear her, feigning sleep. When Dad came home in the night, his dinner time, the first thing he did was switch on the light to see if it was our table his mates had taken away. He did not say anything; but, when Mum told him later he said, 'A good job, too. Throw the lot out!' Now, if we had not told him, he would have carried on about spoiling his home. All day

Ada and Mum have been depressed because the front room looks 'awful' without the table. 'Wimmin is funny critters', as they say in Alfie's Wild West books. We replaced the table with another — an improvement, but still it is 'awful'.

23rd August. Tiger is in the wars again. He stayed out all day, and when Dan told him that his wife was looking for him, he said, 'And I'll stay out again. I mustn't *talk* to anyone now. If I say a word to a woman, she thinks the worst!' I cannot imagine anyone encouraging Tiger to 'the worst'. It is too funny.

24th August. Raining all the morning, but despite that Mum got everyone out of bed to help her prepare to go to the cinema. She would not give Alfie half a chance to refuse — in case it ceased raining. Alfie was quite certain that Mum was not going, and later on she said, 'I think Alfie has "struck"'. Still, we can't expect too much kindness in one year!' As Alfie has only taken me out once, since he has been big enough, there is a good deal of sense in Mum's remark.

M. came in for a little while and has promised to call to-morrow to go over the proofs with me to see that all the corrections have been put in. Since I did them finally with Ada I have found five other errors, and it makes me wonder how many more there are still undiscovered. When doing the proofs for the *Tenement* I found three errors in the last half hour before posting the proof — but they were the only ones left! That was luck. Not one of the critics in England pointed out that I have attributed a play to Galsworthy that is really Masfield's — it was left

to an Australian critic to discover that mistake — but that was not a printer's error — I always get confused with the literary Johns — Galsworthy, Masfield, Drinkwater.

To-night was the last night of Radiolympia and we listened to the broadcast. I have never felt more like writing a letter of protest to the B.B.C. The 'Two Leslies' sang duets with piano. They interpolated 'The Old Sow', a song full of noises, into a song of their own, and the exaggerated way in which Sarony 'raspberried' was annoying — but the audience laughed each time. This performance was so well received that it almost makes me inclined to think that it contained a subtle criticism of the B.B.C. Effects Department.

*25th August.* M. came to-day and we went over the proofs for the last time, checking off the corrections. We found one or two that had not been inserted in the marked proof, and then, showing M. a printer's error that almost defies detection we had a surprise, for M., after failing to find the error, and being shown what it was — a raised comma in an obscure position — showed us a raised comma we had overlooked.

*26th August.* This afternoon I sent off the proof, with a letter pointing out one or two alterations which I think are necessary.

*27th August.* The painters are at work and they returned to our windows to-day to put on the second coat. Dan objects to the smell — I object to the draught, as the bottoms of the windows are open on a level with my ears and I am between two windows as I sit all day.

28th August. Upstairs the ceilings are being taken down and the noise is very reminiscent of our *Tenement* days. There is banging and great falls of plaster on to the wooden floor and it sounds like a miniature thunderstorm. One of the workmen said, 'We've got to take all these —— ceilings down and it is as much as we can do to *knock* some of 'em to pieces!'

I overheard a little of the estate class-warfare to-day. One woman was talking up to another woman at a window somewhere above us and the one upstairs said, 'My drawing-room is in a mess', and the lady below replied, 'Blimey, you got one a-those?' and then in more conciliatory tones, 'It ain't what I call mine!' But the sarcasm was effective, for the chat ended abruptly.

We have heard that when the rooms are painted, three coats of paint are to be put on the walls, and the thought of the upheaval amongst our goods and chattels is very disturbing. Every few minutes Mum talks about the arrangements we must make, suggesting that one room must be shut up and used as a store room, and painted afterwards. It is a problem, apart from having no one to do the shifting about. I have proposed taking the pictures down and letting the painters shift what they can to get at the walls. After all, they only want enough room to wield a brush. Mum is very upset with the worry of it.

29th August. Received a letter from the Dutch publisher expressing his interest and asking for a copy of my book. 'Perhaps I can do you a proposal for a Dutch edition.' I hope he can.

By the last post I had a letter from the publisher with a copy of a Foreword by Beverley Nichols.

30th August. Mum is miserable all day, partly from the worry of the painting to come, but chiefly because of Albert and his wife staying away for so long. She imagines all kinds of calamities; even that they may have been drowned at Frinton where they said they might go for the week-end.

31st August. Mum had hopes of an outing this afternoon but they were shattered early, by the action of a stranger. Alfie came in for a minute to tell her that his booking-clerk had kept him waiting an hour and then had given him a large round to do. It would be impossible to finish in time — and it was so. All the afternoon Mum was saying, 'It's a fine afternoon' or 'Look, there's the sunshine', and I felt as though she were thinking of the sun shining on her as she went along the streets. It is strange how largely these things bulk when you have been indoors for years, as she has.

During the afternoon, Dan was busy finishing a pair of table mats he had promised M. last Christmas, while she set to in the scullery, did the washing up, scraped and cooked chips and fried eggs for some of us. In the meantime, I unfortunately got between the blades of the scissors, of which Mum and Ada are the cutting edges, and we had a regular row. I objected to a remark about the tendency to coarseness in the book, where I have only given a reflection of the reality. The fat was in the fire when they agreed, 'God help you if you didn't have us to tell you what to write'. I reminded Ada of the previous quarrel we had when I wrote a third of the book and refused to let her see it, without it suffering from lack of criticism or excessive coarseness. Then I told Mum she

knew nothing of modern literature and offered to tell her some of the expurgations from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* — just to show what coarseness can be — a threat of which Ada is not altogether ignorant. I have my own integrity to keep me clear of such things.

I was angered by the intrusion into affairs that are peculiarly personal — my creative thinking. I was reminded of Mrs. Thomas Hardy who once said that if she had seen *Jude the Obscure* before it was published it would never have been given to the world. Without concern for the contents of that book I felt that such a remark was almost inexcusable — unless she knew that Hardy regretted its publication. But, in any case, it was rubbing it in rather unfairly in company.

By the last post I received a letter from Mrs. J., a hasty answer to one I sent her yesterday. She has a friend with her who does not believe in the after life, and her letter seemed rather like an SOS. It set me thinking, wondering whether I should reply at once; I feel I should.

1st September. When Ada came into the living-room she read the letter from Mrs. J. out to Mum, who said I should reply at once, so while waiting for dinner I set to on an argument for and against immortality — which reminds me of a chap who once saw a book containing that word, and asked, 'What's all this about "immortality"?'

In a couple of hours I had written a fairly good, though possibly rambling letter, which I decided to include in my diary for to-day as it is the result of much thinking. I wrote: 'I have thought a good deal over the remark



that your friend does not believe in life after death and I find I am much concerned — so much so that I am bound to reply, feeling as I do that such a question is fundamental to human happiness, as well as being the key to the significance of existence. Let me see if I can marshal a few ideas. But I notice that your friend, in your words, “Cannot bring herself to believe it can be”. First there is the fact that that statement is *not a denial* of life after death. Therefore your friend is concerned not with the idea to deny immortality, but the inherent wish to *believe* in it! It is a safe psychological law to realize that if one is in the minority on these major problems that one is probably incorrect in one’s judgment. It is a known fact that most human experiences have indicated immortality — and that is a sweeping argument for the majority. Everyone cannot always be wrong. The evidence runs through history — and prehistoric times also — judging from the discoveries of burial rites — and civilization is only a fraction of human history, and that (human history and civilization) is only a fraction of universal time — the known age of the universe. Then there is the indication from human love: the whole thought underlying this is the belief that it does not end. I don’t mean just human relationship, but the positive quality not dependent on physical relationship, the sort of thing that is creative — the fact that one is a mother or a father *irrespective* of the possessive quality that goes with it that makes people say “Here is *my* child”. For, whether the child is there or not, or at the other end of the earth, and possibly denying one the joy of his or her presence — that love exists despite everything. Once that is *realized* (it is unconsciously known all the time) then one feels in one’s self that immortality is certain.

'When one thinks of human life one has to ask, "Do I sustain the life of my husband, wife, father, mother, or children by any special quality of my regard for them?" And one has to admit that one does not, and further that one cannot sustain one's own life, nor, as a reverse argument, can one be sure that suicide could, or does, *end* one's life. In short there is *no conclusive argument* in favour of total extinction. (The most subtle argument is the one that suggests individual life goes back into a pool of consciousness from whence it came — but that only suggests the blotting out of *human* consciousness — for which idea there is no evidence at all — and as an argument is in favour of immortality of a kind. Really that argument used by H. G. Wells, is the conservation of energy theory of physics — that if you burn a candle, for instance, the candle is not annihilated but exists in the forms of *diffused* light and heat.) That will do for a few ideas; let us consider the argument against immortality.

'First, it denies the existence of God by denying the Creation. That means one has studied the arguments for the existence of God and refuted them. I'll only mention one argument: it is noticed that everything is in *motion* — and that is evidence for what Aristotle called a "Prime Mover" — what we call a First Cause, and what religion calls God. This "motion" is planned and mathematical, and is the basis of Science — which is a search based on the belief that there is an Intelligence behind it all (Science starts off with the fundamental idea behind immortality — the existence of a creative cause). The more Science discovers, the surer scientists become of the Universal Mind.

'Now, the evidence for immortality in human experience is the Resurrection, and no amount of investigation can

disprove that the Resurrection of Christ actually took place. But I'll not continue with that line of discussion.

'The people most likely to deny life after death are the anthropologists, who disregard the flaws in the evolution theory more than any other so-called scientific faculty; incidentally, Catholics teach that evolution can be true and still only be a fraction of Divine Revelation.

'Here is a simple fact. The bones of the body are shaped by what are known as "osteoblasts". The thigh bone is a rather involved structure of curves, knobs and channels, to take strain, balance, and to set the muscles. Now, if osteoblasts that build a thigh bone are taken from the thigh and placed in the arm bone, what happens? You would expect them to build thigh shapes in the arm. But they do not; they build arm bones, and to the *preconceived design*! That is outside the evolution theory, and strangely enough, anthropologists, such as Sir A. Keith, admit the osteoblast activity on the preconceived plan. What directs these things? I'll leave it to you and your friend.

'We are created as self-contained units, and exist within our own personalities, cut off from outward and other things as completely as though nothing else existed but ourselves, individually. But we know other things exist — by the evidence of our senses.

'This isolation is the primary law of being and it is *deliberate* — we were made that way for a special purpose. All the mistakes and unhappiness in the world are caused by attempts to break through the barrier in the pursuit of our idea of happiness or good. They fail unless they are attempts made within the sanction of the plan.

'The whole point is that once we believe that there is a plan for us, the question of whether there is immortality or not fades out as an argument.

'Because we are isolated spirits we cannot force each other to accept an idea, we can only offer suggestions to which each individual may consent or not.

'For your friend's case I would suggest that her difficulty is one of psychological "reverse effort" — she has been hurt so much by an event in her life that, wanting earnestly to believe in life after death, the more she tries, the more difficult it becomes to "bring herself to believe". She should cease worrying about it.'

*3rd September.* Had an appointment with my old tutor.

We always have a good talk. He told me of two of his experiences as a member of deputations to the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister. On one of the deputations Lady Astor, being a lady, had the last word, and said to the Home Secretary, 'I believe you *are* sympathetic!' after relating the failings of all the previous Home Secretaries on the questions discussed — the problem of the exploitation of youths in the distributive trades. As a result of that deputation, a Bill was introduced that did a *little* towards relieving the situation. This memory was released by a remark of mine about the functions of permanent officials; at the deputation, Lady Astor obliterated the half-dozen permanent officials behind the Home Secretary's desk with a wave of the hand and a remark which indicated the source of the obstruction to the Bill.

*4th September.* When Dad came home to-day he passed a remark about my causing 'consternation' in the 'literary world'. I did not see what he meant, but

Mum said that 'consternation' was a new word for Dad to use and she guessed that he was quoting something. Then he produced a cutting from yesterday's *Daily Mirror* with a paragraph about a 'Dustman's Novelist Son' whose autobiography was a 'literary sensation' a few years ago. Dad had forgotten the word and turned 'sensation' into 'consternation', which was *not* what the newspaper intended!

*5th September.* I sat at the door to-day while nurse attended to Mum and Ada, and I saw Albert and his wife approaching — the first visit for over five weeks. I warned Dan to tell Mum by calling down the passage, in case she was over-excited on seeing them, but the chump came to the door to see the miracle for himself.

Mum said what she had to say to him very quietly, but much to the point. Afterwards she said that it took all her control to prevent herself from crying.

Mum admitted being worried over his absence especially as he had not even sent a card. 'What do you want to worry over me for?' he asked. 'I don't know why I should worry over you. It's just a parent's feelings, I suppose. You'll know what it feels like when you're older.'

*7th September.* There were great goings-on to-day on this estate. Two weddings, and children of all ages were running backwards and forwards between the houses. The wedding we could see from our window was of a dustman's daughter, one of the select, beautiful

young women hereabouts. She is indeed noticeably good-looking and her rival is her own sister, and there is a younger girl in the family who promises to be equally attractive.

The dustmen are in the news lately. The other feature of this wedding (apart from the charmers) was that a commissionaire acted as a master of ceremonies. He looked very colourful in these ordinary surroundings and I admit to amazement on first seeing him. The bride and bridesmaids were, in the words of a song, 'lovely to look at' and, Dan asserts, 'delightful to know'. She was dressed in white with a veil, and the bridesmaids in pink. I had a special eye on the dustman father, dressed in his Sunday suit and trying to look disinterested.

Later in the afternoon when the couple drove away in a friend's Austin Seven, the commissionaire attached a large piece of cardboard to the spare wheel at the back with 'Just Married' on it!

Mum hurried to get ready for her cinema outing. She said, 'Do you think people will look at me for wearing this hat — it looks rather a saucy one?'

When Alfie came in he refused to take Mum out; we were mad with him. Even when M. tried to coax him he stubbornly refused. Finally, I thought to send M. down to him (he stayed in the other end room) and offer him half a crown to take Mum, but he said, 'I can't be bought with money!' It was just as well because I would have had my money's worth in telling him just what I thought of him.

Afterwards Alfie said to M., 'I'm sorry for speaking to you like I did', and M. cuttingly replied, 'Don't apologize to *me*'.

8th September. Eileen came over with her mother, and when Alfie came in he took her off to a cinema.

I happened to show an enlarged 'snap' of myself at Worthing to Mrs. Paddie, who has a small one, and she said that she keeps my photograph on the dresser, but every time she looks for it, she finds that Eileen has it in her bag. I am still 'Old George' to Eileen, and am only twice her age.

9th September. I am reading with great interest E.T.'s book on D. H. Lawrence. She is 'Miriam' of *Sons and Lovers* and gives her version of the autobiographical detail in that book. So far I can only see that D.H.L.'s adolescence was troublesome because he had the idealistic mind towards E.T. and a physical consciousness towards other girls. He was extremely sensitive, but his idealism is not unusual; what is unusual is that apparently he had no religious sense, no master sentiment with which to weld the confusion within himself. That is why, I believe, everything seemed 'hopeless' to him.

E.T. and D.H.L. talked of writing. She encouraged him to write the poetry he wanted to attempt. D.H.L. said, 'But what will the others say? That I'm a fool. A collier's son a poet!' In that last phrase I found I could put myself beside him and compare our reactions. I wonder which seems the most odd — a collier's son a poet, or a dustman's son a novelist? To me the position is all in his favour — he did openly go to college and become a schoolmaster — while I am in the position of having it said of me, 'How can you expect him to write,

always being indoors?' The suggestion being that my imagination cannot overcome my limitations. But there is a level of affinity between our respective beginnings. Lawrence's father dug out the coal, my father carts it away, in ashes!

My education has chiefly been in my own hands. I think D.H.L. was lucky to be able to take advantage of his opportunities. The real difference in our reactions to being in the same position is that he shrank from the opinions of others, while I, realizing that only results matter, am prepared to tell people to find something else to think about until I provide, or fail to provide, evidence of novelistic ability.

It is utter confusion of thought to mix the parents' condition with that of a son or daughter. One might as well say of Hugh Walpole — 'I wonder if he can write a good book; his father was a bishop or archbishop or something, you know?' I have seen Walpole's genealogical tree and his forebears have been great in many varying ways.

Even philosophers can write rubbish in confusion. D.H.L. and E.T. read Schopenhauer's essay on 'The Metaphysics of Love', and D.H.L. had written 'Maggie Tulliver and Philip' in the margin against this passage: 'The third consideration is the *skeleton*, since it is the foundation of the type of the species. Next to old age and disease, nothing disgusts us so much as a deformed shape; even the most beautiful face cannot make amends for it.' Schopenhauer wrote of metaphysics on an entirely physical plane, and as if Love is a physical quality, instead of a *metaphysical* thing with physical repercussions. The Catholic scholastics knew better. They could see some meaning in deformity, simply because they recog-



nized a human being as a *created* being, and not merely a skeleton with so much beauty in the flesh and blood shaped attractively upon it. People do not love skeletons, nor the meat on the bone; if they think they do, then they are over-emphasizing physical attraction for a selfish purpose. They do not love the other creature more for his or her beauty alone, there must be truly a quality that is *above physical properties*. There is far more mystery in the metaphysics of love than in any 'third consideration' postulated by Schopenhauer. If his suggestion were even remotely correct, love would cease with old age and flee from disease, yet we know that such is not the case. Love is more than anything purely physical, for life itself is more than existence. Life is the quality that animates the merely physical condition which we know as form; it is that which enables a man to seize an idea and portray it outside of himself in a concrete form, a statue, painting, book, poem and the like. It is an expression of the motive behind the Universe, which is analogous to a musical performance that brings a number and variety of dots upon paper into existence as sound, wherein they pass across a few moments of time as living emotion — a movement that expresses a metaphysical profundity. And life itself, within physical limits, is one expression of the metaphysics of love.

Perhaps I would agree with Schopenhauer if I were not deformed, but in that fact alone I have the refutation of Schopenhauer's 'third consideration'. I find that neither my disease nor my deformity 'disgusts' people. If any objection to this can be made by anyone, then I can only say that the philosopher wrote of the metaphysics of love, and should not have included a treatise on eugenics, or a stud-farm theory. Schopenhauer would have to limit his

definition of love to physical activity before his argument can even be considered, and that is the contradiction of metaphysics.

*10th September.* Alfie's birthday, he is nineteen. We all wished him 'Many happy returns' and I promised him a small money gift, when he needs it. That is meant to humiliate him slightly for his behaviour of last Saturday, but I must be careful not to rub it in when he shows signs of wanting the gift. I think it has done him good. Mum gave him a birthday present, in advance, some time ago, and she said to him, with a laugh, 'I wish I hadn't given you anything at all'.

*11th September.* There are some days when nothing at all seems to happen, and when even the verbal fireworks to which we are accustomed, and by which we enliven ourselves, are missed. Mum asked me what Beverley Nichols meant in the Foreword by using the words 'rude' and 'coarse' about the characters in my book, so I used the quietness of to-day as an example, by contrast. I said our usual manner of living is both rude and coarse, excluding anything actually unpleasant, and to make the point clear I mentioned that the phrase (may it rest in peace) 'our rude forefathers' did not mean that they ran about in their shirts with no lower garment. Then I explained that my remark was coarse. Nichols wrote, 'They may not smell so delicately, their accents may be rude and their gestures coarse'. I am afraid Mum is a puritan, in the best meaning, if not a purist.

*12th September.* Albert and Lil came to-day and an interesting talk on parts of the Bible occurred. As usual in such events I did most of the talking with Mum, Ada, Albert and Lil as audience. Someone asked why the last part of the story of Lot and his daughters was included in a holy book, and to answer indirectly I gave the rules to apply to anything found in the Old Testament. There are two main threads running throughout which give guidance for any particular incident: one is the fulfilment of the Covenant, promised to Eve and repeated to Abraham, the expectation of the Messiah; which explains much in the Old Testament. The second thread is the gradual growth of Divine Revelation which culminates in St. John's phrase 'Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world' (even the synoptic Gospels still have the old mentality of a punishing God — a vindictive judge). From Moses to Jonah can be found the underlying thought that God was for the Hebrews, for in Jonah one finds the prophet actually loses his temper because the people of Nineveh repented and God did not fulfil the prophecy of destruction. That incident, the loss of temper, is the value of the Jonah book. Anything in the Old Testament that puzzles may generally be explained by the religious zeal of the people, though it may look like depravity. The sublimest parts also carry the same message. People are apt to forget that the books of the Bible were chosen to show those two lines of development, and it must be the weakness as well as the strength of the Bible.

We all enjoyed the evening; so much so that no house-work was done.

*13th September.* Another quiet day, which I passed in reading; perhaps that is one reason why it was quiet. There was a play on the wireless, 'Friday the 13th', which we listened to but lost the ending; however the plot was clear and anyone could guess who were killed.

*16th September.* Mrs. Paddie came and related her family woes even to the extent of crying. While she was here in came her son, one of her sources of worry. We do not mind them one at a time, in fact they do their best to be helpful, but together they aggravate one another. When his mother went, young Paddie cleaned out our fireplace, getting sooted up to his elbows, and lit the fire as it was a cold evening.

*17th September.* Mr. G. came to-day. He knew George Lansbury during the war. That led to some amusing anecdotes connected with pacifists. It is strange how the peace attitude to a pacifist differs from the war-time one, which shows what adverse propaganda can do. We talked of Adult Schools, a mutual interest, and then psychology. One psycho-therapist stated that Freud 'invented' his theory of the Super-Ego to meet the criticism of Christian psychologists. That is because the Super-Ego being good is the cause of psychological conflict; if it were an invention, it would prove Freud a genius, if only for the perfect answer which meets even theological objections!

Someone spoke to Dan as he looked out from his window to-day. She said: 'I'm pleased to see you have

your second book coming out'. Dan did not turn a hair but calmly acknowledged the fact! He tactfully explained to us that if it gave the other fellow pleasure to think of it, he should not be undeceived. His sense of humour gets him out of many a tight corner.

*18th September.* At 6.15 p.m. to-day the postman delivered a letter just as Dan was going to keep an appointment at his window. He picked up the letter, said it was for me and promised to bring it down in half an hour. Knowing who the letter was from I saw a chance of some fun, and began to reply at once: 'I shall get your letter in an hour or so, etc.' However, impatience overcame Ada and before an hour had passed she went to the end room and brought back the letter.

We listened to 'Within the Law', another good B.B.C. offering, which has also been a film. It had a melodramatic quality, and Mum asked me if I could write like that. It seemed to me to be the work of a slick, American scenario writer, so my judgment was rather reserved. I may try some day to use the play form for expression, but not yet. One medium at a time.

*19th September.* When the nurse came to attend to Mum and Ada, I sat at the door watching the children playing in the avenue between the houses. They made a good deal of noise, chasing and shouting, and some of the elder girls ran across what used to be the garden as though nothing but road had ever been there. I noticed some children with whips, but they were very careful in their games not to strike the other children,

which rather surprised me as part of the game was obviously the privilege to wield the whip in the excitement of the chase. I know I could not have resisted a sadistic tendency in my youth! I went to the door chiefly to breathe a little more freely, one scarcely notices the lack of air space in a room when one gets no change, but the cool comparative freshness was so enjoyable that I stayed later and later, even though Dan suggested I would catch cold. It was quite late when I went in, or so it seemed to me.

*20th September.* Father H. called this afternoon and there was a funny scene between the priest and Dan with a lot of back-chat, which ended with a remark by Father H. about the smell of Dan's brilliantine. For days Ada has been saying, 'What's that smell about the house?' and Dan was highly indignant when Ada claimed the priest's remark as verification of the suspected locality from which the odour emanated.

Later Lil came over and stayed for the evening.

*21st September.* To-day, when M. came she insisted on Ada going out, so Ada went. They went to the Old English Garden in Battersea Park, a lovely spot.

It has been a fine day, and Mum remarked on several occasions how nice the weather was. I could almost see her thoughts, wishing she were out. It is a great pity that the only cinema that will permit an invalid's chair inside is so far away. I wonder if disabled ex-servicemen ever go to see a film? It is a typical oversight.

*22nd September.* Alfie played football for his club and they lost heavily against older and bigger young men. It seems that Alfie was knocked about, for he is limping and at one part of the game was dazed when 'sandwiched' by two hefty backs. Football used to be a game.

*23rd September.* Albert looked in for a few minutes to-day, which was the only incident recordable. He had a sandwich and then rushed off to pick up his people.

*24th September.* We have had our share of excitement to-day. The chimney caught fire in the living-room and the noise was terrific. Ada was sitting by the fire making toast. We have a fireplace with a hot-water system at the back and the whole arrangement was closed in, fortunately. The first gusts, a kind of down draught from the combustion, rattled the windows alarmingly, and before we knew what was happening, Ada had got across the room. I think it was the adrenal glands that moved her, not her muscles. Then the fire roared, and as there was now no danger Dan continued making the toast. The chimney burned until not a bit of soot was left.

*25th September.* Albert and Lil came early on his day off. At 11 p.m. Mum was still turning out drawers and throwing away the accumulation of years crammed into the drawers out of the way. Dan found a

box of old photographs, and work was held up for a half-hour of laughter. Uncles, aunts, and unknown relatives; an old tin-print, leg o' mutton sleeves, waists, and even a bustle — on Grannie, whose face wore a thundercloud. Mum told us that Grannie had said, 'Look how she (the other daughter) has drawn back my hair' — and it did look tight! There was a photo of myself — in petticoats — saying 'Mare?' to the photographer's 'Look at the dickie-bird!'

Lil said that people were asking her about my book and she did not know what to say to them. Albert surprised me by saying, 'Tell them it's like all the other books — a lot of ——'. I have forgotten the word. I expected Ada to say something. I must ask him, next time he comes, to repeat his remark. Most of us think it was 'boloney' but I think it was only two syllables.

*26th September.* As I lay in bed this morning I heard a friend cleaning the windows for the people upstairs — a part time job of his making. I called out, as he came down the ladder, and he let up the blind to talk to me. I asked him to call to give me a hair-cut — another odd job line of his.

This evening Dan had one of his boys in the scullery peeling potatoes, washing up, and even helping to cook and serve the dinner. He stayed and had dinner and supper with us, and listened to the dance band.

*27th September.* I had not been up very long before my friend arrived to cut my hair. He said that his spare-time odd jobs were rather unsatisfactory as



he is sometimes asked to call again when he goes and his time is wasted. But he thinks things are not too bad — which is good enough in the circumstances.

Very soon, just as he had finished one side, there was a knock at the door. Ada answered, and it was the Estate Manager. We had written reminding them of the need for having Albert living nearer us, on this estate in fact, and she had at last brought round an application form for Albert to fill in. That is something concrete, and we hope it means a definite attempt to help us. The manager is a quietly spoken person, who actually gives one the impression that she is extremely nervous, but nevertheless is very efficient.

*28th September.* When I woke up to-day I was in one of those rare stark moods when I feel quite incapable of seeing any purpose in existence, a kind of cynicism and a fatalistic outlook which is terribly depressing. Strangely enough, I was conscious of a part of my mind which seemed to be observing my mood and knowing that it was a false one, though there is no doubt about the reality of the depression.

I got up at once and began reading an American magazine, one of Alfie's cowboy stories. I sat reading for some time until Dan called out to me to get up; it was so unusual that I answered as though I were still in bed.

Mr. D. came along with his car.

He went to a cemetery. I did not think the scenes would affect me, I thought myself capable of being unmoved by the experience, but I forgot my mood of the morning. He parked the car just inside the gates of the cemetery, and from my seat, with young Paddie sitting beside me

(he had carried me to the car and was pleased to come), I saw a broad path along which periodically went the most pathetic pilgrimage I had ever seen. Young, middle-aged and old, mostly women (they are the only ones with any feeling, says Mum) went along with bunches of flowers and fresh wreaths, some carried watering cans. When I first saw the cans I felt amused, but the next moment I saw the symbolism and it made my heart jump — flowers grow and die — die and spring up again. Resurrection from a watering can — surely the most pathetic thought, and the most touching, one can see in a cemetery. When the women returned they looked at me as though trying to convince me that, just a moment before, they had not cried their hearts out; it was a brave effort, but I could not help looking into their eyes.

Mr. D. drove round afterwards to the places of his boyhood. He showed me his college, and a cul-de-sac where used to be the Plymouth Brethren meeting-place to which they belonged. The services were a torment to him as a child, for there was never any music in the long services, and great silences while the collected brethren waited for the spirit to move them to speak.

*29th September.* In the evening I decided to get some exercise at the piano and I actually enjoyed playing for more than two hours. Part of the time Dan and I annoyed the neighbours with our vocal efforts. Dan also played a ukelele. Every now and then I had to help him with the 'uke' chords which he had forgotten. He picked tunes that were popular years ago, when the 'uke' was played more. I played one tune 'Please don't talk about me when I'm gone' in C, had to

think of the uke part for Dan in D, and thought privately that it sounded like H——. Dan has aspirations as a crooner.

*1st October.* Had a nice letter from Miss E. this morning, to which I replied at once. I told her the details of the book events which normally she would have learned as they occurred, but as she does not come to town regularly visits are less frequent.

We listened to S. P. B. Mais reading poetry to the schools — animal poetry. Blake's Tiger, James Stephens' poem of the rabbit in a snare and D. H. Lawrence's unrhymed verse on the dead yellow mountain lion. Mais said that 'frost face' was an original descriptive thought: I am not at all sure. I knew of a man who had a very good job but because he was the servant and not the master he always grumbled. His favourite description of his employer was 'My frosty faced old b——!'

*2nd October.* Mrs. B. came to-day. She showed me *Full House* which she had brought from the library and was not enjoying.

We happened to talk of D. H. Lawrence and Mrs. B. thought him a horrid man. She knew someone who had seen his paintings. We did not continue the talk.

Had a letter from the publisher asking for a photograph.

*3rd October.* I felt better to-day and tackled some of the correspondence I owed. I wrote nine letters. Writing is a good safety valve for me, and I shall enjoy doing more of it.

4th October. A card from Father Martindale, s.j., congratulating me. He is such a busy person that I refrain from adding to his postbag. He once told me that he answers thirty letters in the morning. I believe he said 'before breakfast', that is before he does his usual work.

5th October. "Although Alfie had promised to take Mum to the cinema, and we all hoped she would go, she was again unlucky, for Alfie came home fairly early to show us how large his round was for half a day's work. He estimated that it would keep him out until 4 o'clock, when he should be finished at one.

A reporter came from the *Star* for an interview — out of the blue, as it were. The man asked questions about the conditions here, how I write, and why I write — a most intelligent question these days. He said that Ada had a 'literary look'. At that time in the morning I would have described it as 'lean and hungry'.

7th October. Father H. came early to-day for our Holy Communion service. Afterwards he read from the *Imitation*. It is always a very happy time for us. Father H. made breakfast for us and asked Dan what he wanted. 'I go on steam-power, so I'll just have a cup of tea', said Dan. 'I would have thought it was gas-power', said the priest, hinting at my brother's ability for unceasing chatter.

In the evening a Press man called from the *Daily Sketch*. I wanted to know how he had found out and he brought a cutting from to-day's *Star* from his pocket.

'Pluckiest Family in London', with my photograph. The interview of last Saturday read like a page from *A Tenement in Soho* and will be easily recognizable by anyone who has read the book — which is my compliment to the *Star* man. Did ever an author say of another, 'He writes as well as I do!' Is there such a man?

The *Sketch* man was terribly sensitive and though he wanted photographs he did not wish to put us out in the least.

8th October. We are beginning to wonder who it can be whenever we hear a knock on the street door. One came soon after we had risen. Ada answered and asked a young lady to wait a moment. As she came away from the door Ada heard a young man asking — 'Did they ask you to wait?' Ada returned to pay the coal bill to the young lady, and my sister learned that the young man was from 'Photopress, Ltd.' and wanted a picture of the author at work on his *next* novel!

A gasfitter came to attend to our stove and Dan talked to him while he did his job. The man was evidently a trade unionist. 'I don't believe in overtime', I heard him say. 'Them as do believe in it I'd make 'em work day and night to cure 'em'. He was already doing overtime himself, which Dan pointed out. Our stove is packed in between a dresser and a cupboard, and to attend to the taps he had to take the whole stove out. 'I don't 'old with doing overtime', he said, 'but the dough is 'andy.'

Had a letter from the B.B.C. about a possible talk in 'In Town To-night'. I rather like the idea of talking to the world for two minutes forty-five seconds.

9th October. This morning, before I was up (about twelve o'clock), a reporter came from the *People*. He talked to me while I was in bed about writing *Neighbours*. He took a few notes.

10th October. Miss E. came to-day and we told her about the Press men and showed her the photos. She was surprised at the amount of publicity the book is getting and seems likely to get. I think she was surprised and amused at the possibility of my speaking on the wireless.

11th October. At the end of an exciting week Dad shows signs of appreciating the tension in the atmosphere. He washed and dressed himself carefully 'In case anyone caught him here untidy and unprepared'. Mum laughed so much that he went straight to bed. I think Dad stands his better-half very well, but it was rather late in the week to begin expecting callers.

There was an amusing incident this evening between Alfie and Mum. He was half asleep and Mum kept on repeating, 'You must make the tea . . . you must make the tea,' but Alfie, who can be present in body and absent in spirit, as it were, took not the slightest notice. Mum remarked to me, 'You have to do this in psychology' (alluding to sleep suggestion), and apparently it interested Alfie, for he, showing unsuspected knowledge of a similar matter, said, 'Now develop psychic powers and do it yourself'. He turned, and went to sleep.

There was a talk broadcast this evening from Eden — Anthony, not Garden of — relayed from Geneva. It was

a string of platitudes about the League and Sanctions. If there is one thing clearer than another it is that the League will sink in a flood of words.

Mum asked me if I had written anything about the war, but I said I had not. All the talk is a cloud that disguises an immense betrayal of the attacked nation.

12th October. We were scarcely out of bed this mid-day when a lady journalist from *Reynolds'* called for an interview. By now we are used to talking about ourselves.

In getting up Dan fell and made rather a noise. Ada, in alarm, called out 'Are you all right?' though what she could do to help is a problem. 'Don't know yet', replied Dan before moving to see if all his bones were still intact. 'Can I help?' asked Ada. 'Yes, pour me out a cup of tea and I'll be in for it.' Dan spoke in tones which suggested that tea at the moment was capable of healing every human ill — especially fractures — however, by that time we knew he was still intact.

13th October. There was a special article in the *People*, with these headlines: 'Triumph for Helpless Cripple'. 'Four Walls No Longer Hold Him', 'Achievements of a Dustman's Son' — to which I add — 'Three Cheers for the Dustman'. That's news, that is.

We bought *Reynolds'*. Mum looked through it, and we saw her gazing at a centre photograph in which three firemen stood. 'The Dauntless Three', she read out, and stopped to laugh. *We* were the dauntless three, not the firemen.

14th October. The postman opened the street door and put in a heavy packet for me. I guessed it was my copies of *Neighbours*. Ada could not wait and, getting up, opened the parcel. Eventually she brought a copy along to show me, and it looks much better than I had imagined. We laughed at there only being Thomas on the spine — 'That's prophetic,' said Ada. 'They do that for Hardy, Shaw and those,' and as the book has a 'standard' appearance there is ground for her humour.

Mrs. Paddie called to ask if we knew anything about the newspapers as she had seen the *People*. As she dabbed her eyes, she said, 'I've been looking for work to-day', and with unconscious humour, 'but me eyes is bad'.

15th October. Publication Day — like Empire Day, only more important. From the letters I receive people think that I shall have a few sleepless nights — especially before the great day. But having done my best, I slept the sleep of the just.

My first thrill was a large bouquet from Mrs. B. after she had read only six chapters. Then just as Lady Y arrived, there came a telegram from a reviewer, congratulations. At the time I was changing my shirt, so Lady Y had to go to Ada's room for a while.

Lady Y had been to a big stores to ask for the book; she handed in the advertisement card and the man, on seeing the author's name, exclaimed, 'George Thomas, oh, that's all right. The book will come as a matter of course.' 'How do you know?' asked Lady Y. 'Well, he wrote *A Tenement in Soho* and that sold very well.' It amused her very much.



17th October. The first review out to-day. I get the headline in the *Daily Herald* — 'As a Dustman's Son Sees Life.' (Good old dustmen!) It ends, 'A clear, steady, unsentimental novel — and a passport to a Brave Old World'.

18th October. The doctor came in this evening. After congratulating me, he began talking enthusiastically about a new and hopeful treatment for us. It is similar to the treatment for myasthenia gravis, that I was so keenly interested in. Like that treatment, it is also expensive. It is based on the theory that our trouble is a deficiency — the first time I have heard that theory of the disease as a diagnosis. It is simple, too. The idea is to supply the lacking digestive product, and the medicine is Aminoacetic acid made non-toxic. It is all very exciting, and we have decided that Dan is to be the first to have the treatment. It is not possible to say whether the medicine will be a cure, but it is good to know we can at least try.

19th October. We listened to 'In Town To-night' — in case I was broadcasting — as Dan idiotically put it. Horatia Nelson (aged over 90) was one of the interesting people included. She plays grandmother parts on the films, and is a descendant of Nelson. When asked to say when she would retire, she said, 'When I've made enough money for my old age'.

Afterwards, we listened to another unrehearsed debate on 'There is no equality before the law for rich and poor'. It was extremely interesting, chiefly because Mr. Pritt, k.c., of the Bentham Committee for Poor Litigants, was

one of the debaters. He claimed there was no equality: the debate was side-tracked into a discussion on the law as it is now, reflecting the will of the people — if they wanted it altered they would see that it was altered (one of the fundamental fallacies of the theory of democracy). The Chairman, a Lord Justice of Appeal, was on the side of the law, and they managed Mr. Pritt fairly well between them. Then in summing up, the Chairman did an extremely clever thing, he described how in the Courts of Appeal before the day's work is begun a very beautiful Collect is read — the same one every day — in which they are exhorted to be scrupulously fair. The Collect was delivered with all the majesty of the law, 'And with this Collect *ringing* in our ears', etc. The Chairman was clouding with prose — religious prose at that — the real point of debate. Whether a case gets into court or not there is this to be considered — and it is an issue for which no law can be evolved. It is the private opinion of many barristers that a poor man may have 90 per cent of the letter of the law on his side, but most poor persons' cases are lost because they cannot win the other 10 per cent. Except in special instances, the sympathy of the law is on the side of the privileged one. Especially is this so in cases where the poor man has a Counsel — as Mr. Pritt knows well from his experience of the Bentham Committee. Those who remember that John Galsworthy was a barrister will know what his play *Loyalties* means. The worst offender in that debate was the Chairman.

20th October. Father H. came to-day to talk about the new treatment suggested by the doctor. He did his best to persuade us against trying the medicine,

apparently from fear that we would get excited, or worse, over it. I poured cold water on the argument by saying that we had already decided that only Dan was to try it, and that so far as the professional attitude towards the treatment concerned us that was the doctor's affair, not ours.

21st October. The great event of the day was the arrival of Dan's bottled muscles — Glycine, just a powder with no apparent magical properties.

Mrs. B. came and was enthusiastic about *Neighbours*, she had read it twice straight off. 'As a sign of the effectiveness of the book', she said, 'I even made my hubby laugh over it, and I've never been able to do that before.' I asked, very innocently, what the parts were which she read out, and Mrs. B. had a sudden lapse of memory. Mum chuckled audibly.

Arthur came, played the piano for a while and said that he or Frank would take me to the B.B.C. if I wanted either of them. My hairdresser also suggested he could help, and there are Alfie and Albert. Perhaps on the afternoon it happens — if it does happen — I shall not have anyone to help. Life is like that.

23rd October. Some letters from readers. In the evening I had a review from the *Birmingham Post* which is very good — 'Mary Ann is a Dickens character', etc. All very comforting.

24th October. Albert came this morning and stayed one and a half hours during which time he made tea, lit fires and tidied up generally. As it was very cold we all appreciated having the rooms warmed for us.

The evenings seem to be very full nowadays, which is a good thing as it helps the winter time along. There are not many more agreeable things than the company of friends in a warm room on a winter evening.

*25th October.* This morning there were knocks on the door, but as it takes Ada so long to dress and see who it is, we have to 'cock a deaf ear'. After four attempts, someone pushed a long white envelope through the letter-box. Ada eventually discovered that it was the B.B.C. talk script.

*26th October.* Albert and Lil slept here overnight as Albert had done so much in clearing out rooms that it took him longer than he expected to put it all tidy again.

When Mr. D. came he brought his car — a larger one this time. He wanted us to go out instead of playing chess, but Ada would not go as she had a headache. M. had arrived a few minutes before Mr. D., so, as Dan insisted on having the seat next the driver, I had to sit in the back and for that I needed help in case I lost my balance — as I do sometimes in a car. Bravely, M. volunteered, and I had some fun in trying not to sway her way when the car swung — it might have been most embarrassing. However, there were no calamities. Mr. D. asked where we wanted to go and Dan took command — he always does. It was 'round the left' or 'straight on' or 'round the right' until we were on the Portsmouth Road. Eventually we headed for Claygate, where Dan nearly missed the turning off the by-pass. We went to his camping ground

on the farm and had a look round the place. Dan introduced me to 'Old Burch' (84, not out) whom I met gun in hand. He had been after some rooks in one of the fields. He is a proper 'oldest inhabitant', including fringe beard. The 'guv'nor' asked him what he thought of 'automatic scarers' for the fields. Apparently a gun goes off regularly and the birds take not a bit of notice, and actually continue to sit on it. Old Burch gave a scornful laugh and looked round his audience in the car, 'Eh, I told 'e that if 'e looked at it the next day, 'e'll foind they'd — on it.' The presence of a young lady seemed not to affect him in the least. He gave another derisive laugh and altered the position of his gun.

It was getting dark when we got home, and Dan's mystery trip had made Mr. D. late for an appointment.

*27th October.* There was a very good review in *Reynolds'*.

The phrase I like is, 'Delineated with the accuracy of a Holman Hunt and the inspiration of a Corot' — high praise indeed.

*28th October.* I had hardly any sleep so I stayed in bed till 3.30 p.m. to make up for it.

I am getting very good letters from readers, which is very satisfying. A bookseller wrote to tell me the novel should be dramatized.

*29th October.* We had a letter for Dan to-day. Alfie brought it in with mine. Some time after 3 p.m., as Dan had not got up, we opened the letter — it was from Mr. G., who said he would look in about 5

o'clock. Fortunately, Mr. G. was an hour late — so everything was all right. He could not stay long, but I learnt their opinions of *Neighbours*. His was favourable, but he thought my study had been too sympathetic. Mrs. G. in a letter said that the people were too charming. I am promised a good argument when she comes to see us. I have a very good case without going into any argument — the diary was not written for publication, and so is a witness to the facts of working-class life as it is lived. Furthermore, as regards *Neighbours* being true to life, I have only to point out that if I had attempted to write any other kind of picture, I might have been told that I did not know what I was writing about. Most of the story is made up of *interior settings*, which speaks for itself. True, I could have written a poster kind of book, a picture on the crude side, the only kind of book people expect, apparently. But why should I? I write what I know.

30th October. Dan is complaining of feeling very tired these mornings, which he attributes to his new muscle medicine. He also aches. 'I'm twenty-five years of age', he said, 'and I've got growing pains — I'll never stop growing now.' He suggests that the medicine has begun to take effect.

We had to send one of the estate children to the butcher this evening, so to amuse the boy I drew pictures of what we wanted. 'Three days' supplies, rabbits, salt pork and salt silverside. I drew two rabbits, a pig, and the back view of a cow — all tail and 'hips' with the head looking round the corner. It looked rather funny; the child was amused and so was the butcher.

31st October. Sister Anthony paid us a visit — she is only allowed outside of her parish by special permission. She came for a copy of the new book. My inscription delighted her, and I gave her a signed photograph. They will go out to her sister in New Zealand — who has a signed copy of the *Tenement*. That copy was lent to a priest out there and was lent by him to priest after priest until the dear lady thought her signed copy was lost for ever — but it came back — to be borrowed immediately by a Catholic lady in Dunedin who had been waiting to see the book. I had an eighteen-page letter from that lady. But I think the record for the diary is fifteen readers of the same copy in fourteen days. That happened in Marylebone.

Dad came home laughing at me. 'No wonder you're getting a bald patch. It's the people patting you on the head,' he said. It seems that my drawing was saved and shown to the neighbourhood. Apparently there is a great joke in the picture of the cow's 'silverside'.

1st November. I received the final script from Capt. ——— for the broadcast. I am to be announced as the author of *A Tenement in Soho* which apparently is well remembered at the B.B.C.

At about 4 o'clock Mum began to worry me about getting ready for the B.B.C. to-morrow. What clothes am I to wear? What kind of underclothes? Have I got a clean shirt, as the washing has not been sent? And so on. My answer was to take no notice.

2nd November. Mum said she had no sleep through going over and over in her mind the process of getting me to the B.B.C. by 5 o'clock. But not one of us

rose any earlier than usual; generally Mum begins to call us at 9.30 or so, but of course we take no notice. However, this morning Mum did not call us — so she must have slept. I got ready very slowly and Dan helped me on with my collar — always a nuisance. Mr. D. called for me punctually and Alfie took me out. We avoided the main streets, went through the park, where Mr. D. told me he was 'pinched again' for doing over 30 m.p.h. at Denmark Hill — from business preoccupation and following the car in front which was doing more than 30 m.p.h. At that point Alfie reminded Mr. D. of the 20 miles limit inside the park.

Mr. D. did a grand sweep up to the entrance of Broadcasting House. Alfie sat me in my chair, but the foot-rest was too high and just before getting into the lift I made him lower it. I was thinking of having to sit for three hours in an uncomfortable chair. We all went up to the sixth floor, round the corner and along a corridor, where I was met and put into a little room rather like a large alcove with a couch running round most of the wall. There were no windows but little ventilation squares were cut out all round the wall at the top. A wireless set was in one corner reproducing at the moment the rehearsal in 6 B or 6 C studio. 'We are the Harmony Guys. . . . Father don't like guys, although Guy Fawkes was a good man. . . .' 'What do you mean — a *good* man?' 'Well, didn't he try to blow up the Houses of Parliament?' They were three youngsters about 12 years old — two obviously twins.

My rehearsal was at five. I was taken into a studio and put against a small table, the steel kind, with a felt top, and Mr. Hanson went through the script with me. In rushed Brian Michie and Capt. ——— with the report . . .



too fast, sounds like reading, voice very soft. We tried again . . . a little better, but still too fast. We went over the script, cutting it slightly to save a few seconds. I said I would talk more slowly when the time came. Mr. Michie was very pleased with the second attempt because I had got the suggestion of a laugh into the end part — backed up by gurgles from Mr. Hanson. We had seconds to spare, so we went through the script again, slower and louder. The result was satisfactory as the gurgles were reproduced. Mr. Hanson put downward strokes at the full stops to indicate pauses, and the business of preparation was ended. I had been rather nervous but that was 'mike fright' — I didn't like the nearness of the microphone hung in a steel square, 'sprung' by ordinary green cord in the frame.

When I got back to the waiting-room there were new arrivals, two old-time variety stars who had appeared in the Command Performance during the week, and a young Russian actress. They were wondering if old Frank Bertram (aged 95) would remember his part. He looked very old and wore white tie and tails. He was reading a carbon copy of his script, without glasses. Alice Leamar (65) asked him a question and gave him his 'cue'. He spoke one line, 'I certainly do, my dear' — his part — and it sounded like the baritone of a once good actor. They waited for Frank Marlowe, Secretary to the Variety Artists' Benevolent Fund, before doing their rehearsal. Mr. Marlowe suggested alterations to the script. They asked Frank — Old Frank to everyone by now — if he were all right. He waved the script dramatically, and patting his bald head with a broad, flat palm said, 'The rest is here'. Old Frank, at 95, was proud to acknowledge that he had memorized his last part.

The actress did her rehearsals and then disappeared down the corridor. No sign of 'nerves' there. Neither were the 'Harmony Guys' nervous; they ran about the place as though at home, and reassured Capt. — that they knew their parts, with many 'Yes, Sirs'.

Then from nowhere appeared a very little man, no higher than the glass-topped table, with a music case and a newspaper under his arm. He was perspiring nervously and mopped his forehead freely. He was to sing in the 'Entertainment' part of the Saturday Magazine, with a miner tenor and a cook contralto — all trained by a Madame —. Then there arrived the Crofters, a man and woman, who had brought the Harris Tweed to London for the Duke of Gloucester and Lady Alice Scott. The man said something to me about it being a fine day and then sat like a rock, as though alone.

Edwin Styles, the humorous man in 'News of the Week', came along. As he passed me I thought he looked more like an athlete than an actor or a comedian. He seemed rather superior in such mixed company.

We sat about waiting until the programme began, then the time went quickly enough. In the radio drama there were revolver shots and we heard the reports through the wireless set before the sound came the few feet down the passage.

I sat for about ten minutes with the announcer, Mr. Marson, and listened to the programme on the loud-speaker in the studio. The light signals were interesting and the announcer watched for his cue. He announced from his seat the turn in the next studio and I noticed his announcing technique — a stance like a slight stoop

towards the 'mike' and the sweep of his arm after his announcement — taking the papers away without rustling them.

He announced me from a slightly different angle as I was positioned with Mr. Hanson at the 'mike', and it was a powerful announcement. (As Ada said afterwards, it was in the best 'My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen' manner of the Toast Masters.) Then I forgot the announcer and the mike, and Mr. Hanson was only a voice asking questions. I played the phrases slowly just as though I were talking and not reading. Mr. Hanson held up the script to prevent rustling and to get the voices at the right angle up to the 'mike'. Reading from the table level would have sent our voices away from the 'mike'. I watched the lights — though Mr. Hanson held up a warning finger in case I spoke. The announcer patted me on the shoulder and I realized then that Mr. Hanson was sitting with his arm round my back.

Outside in the corridor Capt. — rushed up to me with his arm raised (rather like a Nazi salute) to say it was 100 per cent better than the rehearsal. I was very pleased. We all stayed until the programme ended. The old stars did well. Alice Leamar sang 'And Her Golden Hair was Hanging Down Her Back'.

Soon after, the end came and we all hung around while the pay slips were handed out, then there was a general exodus. I went down in the lift and Alfie inquired for the pay desk. Just then Albert ran into the lobby and exclaimed, 'It came over excellently. We'll have to make you a crooner'. He had the car outside, though he had listened in at home.

Mum was pleased that I had cut a rather harrowing sentence from the script. Dan 'sweated' for me. He said,

'If you'd let the Thomases down I'd have . . .' The threat was left to my imagination.

Alfie met a boy in the street as he hurried out to the cinema — 'Just 'eard a bloke on the wireless the dead spit of your brother,' he announced.

*3rd November.* The election we feared is raging around my infant!

*4th November.* Our day for Holy Communion. Afterwards Father H. made tea for the breakfast. He missed the broadcast, but had received letters from friends.

One of his letters contained news of a request for *Neighbours* to be put into Braille. That is quick work.

Had some letters from listeners to the broadcast. All very interesting.

To-day is nomination day and we received the election matter for the Conservative Candidate for St. George's — Mr. Duff Cooper. '... The finances of Great Britain were in a state of collapse. Industries all over the country were closing down, trade was failing, the numbers of the unemployed were mounting daily, taxation was steadily increasing, the national budget was unbalanced and for the first time in our history we were unable to borrow money in the markets of the world. Great Britain was on the verge of bankruptcy. That was the result of two years of Socialist rule.'

How very true. But what a very untrue implication it holds.

*5th November.* Guy Fawkes Day. A day which is a peak day in nationalistic propaganda. Poor old Guy could not have blown up the Houses of Parliament had he wanted to. Gunpowder has to be packed tightly, and he only had a few barrels of inferior stuff in a large cellar. As a political satire a bill was passed by James I a few years afterwards making gunpowder stronger.

But there is one thing about the stuff — it is noisy, and we have had everyone on the estate blowing up their money. A youngster came in to see if we wanted any errands — we did — and we ‘remembered the guy’. Soon afterwards there were noisy bangs round our windows — evidently he was giving us the pleasure also.

On the 5th Dad gets no sleep before 9 p.m., when fireworks are banned, and so he has a grudge against Guy Fawkes and all the consequent machinations. I once lit one in the front room in our old house and people rushed up from the street thinking the place on fire; it was a pencil-like object with plenty of sparks. I was nervous and threw it into the pail.

And did I ‘catch it’.

Had some more letters from the B.B.C. One was from a myasthenia gravis case, who thought my weakness was the same. She has had the ‘marvellous injection’ and was normal for a few hours.

*6th November.* I think this is a mad world. For once in history the old joke has been reversed — the one about kissing the electorate’s babies. In St. George’s it is the candidate’s baby that gets the kisses. I’ll wager Mrs. Fremantle doesn’t take her son round

with her often — but the event has to be recorded — for the sake of posterity. I don't know if anyone has kissed the candidate yet. Her election address contains this: 'This sudden election, dropped from behind the smoke-screen of a dramatic and too-sudden conversion to the League of Nations, need not be a tear-bomb to blind us into renewing the feckless mandate given four years ago to the National Government.' Is this directed towards the working classes in Pimlico? If so, the only result will be a gorgeous 'Blimey'.

There was a Royal Wedding to-day.

Lady Z called at six-thirty and stayed until 10 p.m. And what a talk it was. We discussed, and even argued about, many subjects, including politics, the helplessness of shareholders in companies, Russian anti-God campaign, religion as a necessity of the soul — fortunately this came before the Russian argument, and we agreed that, religion being necessary to the soul, all that could be said for or against the anti-God campaign is that it is an error which will be admitted sooner or later. We agreed, but we had the argument first. Then there was the working-class attitude towards the double problem of old age and unemployment. Lady Z would not agree with me that people *fear* both those things; she knows families that save on their wages. I said that saving was a sign of the fear, because they can never save enough, especially if there is a family. Lady Z said that people do not have large families nowadays. We mentioned two neighbours with nine and twelve children respectively, keeping them on a 'living wage'. The phrase itself shows the principle of minimum wages which, while enough for living, is clearly not even a fair wage. And yet some people save. What an immense optimism and courage. The drawback

in such discussions is that one has to let one's best points go unnailed from common politeness.

Lady Z read my reviews several times. She said they were very good, but asked, 'Aren't you fed up with being called a dustman's son?' I shrugged my shoulders as I tried to explain the nature of 'news' — especially the headline type of news. A novel of itself is not news, neither is a dustman — there are too many of both, but if a dustman wrote a novel which was published, then that would be news. The next best thing to a dustman novelist is the dustman's son — and I fill the bill. In any case, the only kind of criticism that matters is that which considers whether a work of art achieves or falls short of what was intended in the medium used, and ancestor worship, however inverted, holds no place in it.

M. came later and when she heard voices she thought it was 'a row' until she saw Lady Z. Very soon M. was drawn in, as a court of reference, as she knows the attitude of both sides, being familiar with the arguments of our visitor's circle. All told it was a very interesting evening which cannot be done justice in a diary. I already write too much of most things.

*7th November.* I received a second letter from the lady who suffers from myasthenia gravis. She is making slow progress with Glycine, the medicine Dan is taking, coupled with ephedrine. She is going to talk to her specialist next week as she thinks there are distinct possibilities of benefit for us from the treatment.

Dad took a long time lighting the fire for us this morning; he takes pleasure in getting the fire going from the smallest amount, or the most diverse kinds, of material,

and on cold days it is a practice which has its irritating side. To-day, he used a cardboard sugar carton, some cardboard, a few sticks of wood, some paper, and on this he built an edifice of coal. He set it alight and stood back, waiting. Mum glanced at his handiwork, obviously wishing he would hurry up as she said — 'There's a nice "built-up area" ' — which caused Dad to exceed the speed limit for the first time and jab at the fire destructively with the poker. It fell in but burnt up.

In the news on the wireless to-night it was stated — 'There will be no religious service next week on account of elections.' This surprised me, partly because the mid-week service was begun when the Labour Government had 'put the country in the soup'. I thought that religion would not so openly be put into second place by politics. I would think that, with a new set of members being elected, a church service would be more than usually necessary. After all, in electing members who only need votes to get put in (no other qualification being desired or expected), Divine guidance becomes all the more imperative.

*8th November.* Our doctor called to see how Dan was reacting to the new treatment, but it is too soon to tell as the improvement must be very slow, if any. Dan can only assure the doctor that he feels muscle pulling where he never had any before, but this may be only psychological. The doctor was very interested in the letters from the myasthenia gravis case and told us that the other drug ephedrine was an equivalent of adrenalin — the glandular secretion that enables one to do superhuman



things on occasions, but as it is a drug, it needs watching. He will not use it yet.

It was really an uproarious visit. We laughed over our remarks that the treatment was doing Ada and myself good — just by having the bottle on the table. Semi-seriously I said, 'I'm thinking of treating my pancreatic juices by auto-psychology', and the doctor smilingly replied, 'Well, my sister has lent me some books and I'm thinking of applying suggestion to my bald spot' (all over the top of his head). To this Dan said, 'I thought I could see a little fluff there.' The doctor simply roared. I think we do him good when he comes here.

Talking of the treatment he asked Dan something about the formula and to our immense surprise Dan replied, 'CH<sub>2</sub> CN<sub>2</sub> CO OH' — only the doctor did not show surprise, but he said, 'We'll make a practitioner of him yet.' On the strength of that admission Dan asked him for a clinical thermometer. The doctor pulled out half a dozen from a pocket and handed over a new one. It will be useful.

*9th November.* Alfie told us a tale to-day. He had to deliver at the Tate Gallery and, on coming out with a large basket filled with packing, was stopped at the side door by a sergeant commissionaire and asked to empty the basket. Handful by handful the basket was emptied by, and to the satisfaction of, the sergeant, who, on finding no pilfered masterpieces, told Alfie he could fill the basket again. 'Not likely', said Alfie, 'you emptied it and threw the stuff about, so now you can clear it up', and he picked up his basket and walked out. Alfie is like that.

When M. came she decided to take Ada to her flat for tea. Just as they were going the postman delivered a review which set us all talking. A pageful in the *Tatler* by Richard King — and very good. This is one of the 'plums'.

When they came back we found they had both also been shopping — buying tomatoes, grapefruit, and a cushion. M. bought a teapot stand. Trivial things, but happy little excitements in our little world.

10th November. Had a visitor to-day. Basil, the son of the shopkeeper next door to the tenement in Soho, who now lives in the country, came to give me his father's congratulations on my broadcast.

Albert and Lil came and gave the rooms a good look over. Alfie played table-tennis with Albert during the evening. It was a comfortable evening for us, and suggests we shall all be very happy when my brother and his wife get their flat on this estate.

Listened to the service from St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and the address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who made the most of the remembrance value of Armistice Day, and suggested that Polling Day be approached in the same frame of mind. There was no party bias in the address, but I believe the seriousness of the occasion has a 'For God and Country' atmosphere that cannot be interpreted as socialistic in tendency. Perhaps I am prejudiced in feeling that in an election Labour interests do not get fair treatment. It just shows how little value *réason* has when one's emotions are concerned in an affair; and I do deceive myself that I am unbiased — which is rubbish — I suspect I am a hot socialist, and

merely because I have been through nearly all of the shadows of life with so little actual sunshine. I think I shall make an effort to vote this time — it will be my first.

*11th November.* Armistice Day. We listened to the Cenotaph service. The Silence was not silent for us, our wireless set crackled noisily, trains rushed past into Victoria Station — which I suppose are noises to be overlooked.

It is a pity that arms are shown at the Cenotaph. There is no denying that it is a militaristic display, though it is said that there is no better way of honouring the dead than to have the Services properly represented there — as armed services. It is to be remembered, I hope, that the million dead sacrificed their lives partly as deluded idealists and partly because the enemy took to the use of arms unfairly — if it can be argued that the use of arms is ever fair. Now, if one had a husband, sweetheart or brother killed in an air smash, do you think any living person would remember the anniversary by flying over the spot in an aeroplane, or by learning to use an aeroplane to remind one of how dangerous flying can be? No. A sensible person would hate the sight and sound of an aeroplane, especially on the anniversary. But, public opinion is not considered. Arms at the Cenotaph is a War Office order. In time it is hoped that the patriotic uses of Remembrance Day will be completely submerged by its militaristic uses. Even now it is expected that there will be an increase in recruiting as a result of the display of armed force at the Cenotaph. And how many people do not know the difference between patriotism and militarism. What a

great benefit ignorance can be if it is manipulated properly — which is probably the first purpose of propaganda.

Had a letter from Sylvia Townsend Warner's mother who enjoyed *Neighbours*. She made a penetrating remark in suggesting that the character 'Jim Hunter' resembles my chauffeur brother. I believe she has a snap of us both — which gives the game away.

Listened to the story of Capt. Scott on the wireless. Very impressive. It is a shame that Amundsen had to duplicate the attempt and as these attempts are primarily of scientific importance it is most unscientific to duplicate efforts. I do not think that the loss of such lives is worth the glory it reflects upon a supposed decadent nation. Anyway, all nations are decadent — it is one of the certain processes of the softening we call civilization. It needs a holocaust of a war to bring out the evidence that courage is still a characteristic of the nation (any nation), but then, filthy war is apparently the apex of civilization — as witness the Italian method of bringing civilization to savage Abyssinia — by tanks and poison gas.

12th November. Had a card from a clergyman in a Theological College — a place where they had a copy of the *Tenement* — until one of the students tested his theology by purloining the book. It was to say he liked the new book.

There was a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* on Saturday. It is fairly good but has an unfortunate beginning. 'It is a pity that Mr. Thomas has been encouraged to write this novel; his *A Tenement in Soho* was an excellent piece of work, a true account of his own life and thoughts, and he might easily have used the material

that makes his first novel in writing a non-fictional account of life as he knows it.' I would be glad to know who it was that encouraged me to write the novel. And furthermore, I would like to meet the person who would attempt to discourage me from writing — which is the only activity left to me. I have sufficient to discourage me in my helplessness and the unhelpful environment — without advice from outsiders — but, I will say this — if I *had* had some encouragement in writing, it would not have taken me four years to earn such a remark from a reviewer, even from such a paper as the *T.L.S.* I educated myself; I equipped myself with the literary ability to write, and I will encourage myself to do whatever I think I can do, whatever the effort. I feel that the reviewer wants to be helpful — but fancy telling a person as helpless as I am that I should not be 'encouraged' to write a novel. Everything in my life, or nearly everything, encourages me to lie down and die, but I shall not do so — even to please the *Times Literary Supplement*.

In the news on the wireless it was announced that a Boy Scout had been awarded the 'Cornwall Medal', the highest scout award. I have talked about Cornwall the V.C. with men who were officers during the war and it is considered that the award was a propaganda stunt to get young people to join the Navy. That looks rather cynical, but the truth is worse. I mean the truth as related by an eye-witness, if reliable. A man who was wounded on the same ship in the same engagement told me that Jack Cornwall could not leave his gun or fall down to die because he was held up by his headphones. '*He* got a V.C., but those who came off the ship deserved a sackful.' When I remember the pennies we took to school for the Cornwall Fund, and the blaze of hero-worship, one can

believe that the incident became propaganda. That memory was only surpassed by the death of Scott in the Polar regions. I still recall the feeling of tragedy.

I had rather a charming letter from a young woman in Lausanne who has just read the *Tenement*. She thanks me because, 'Your courage gave me courage, when I wanted to die'. The letter is full of open, charming passages.

13th November. Had a card from Father Martindale to say he had looked at my book at the Exhibition at Dorland Hall, and that I had been mentioned at one of the lectures, which is all very exciting and amusing. After all, the exhibition is one of the events in the book world, so it can be considered a privilege.

A letter came later from the myasthenia gravis case who wrote after my broadcast. The letter had been to a wrong address. In it my correspondent expressed her sorrow that her specialist had not held out any hopes of our benefiting from the new treatment. I was rather surprised to find the specialist had said that they knew much more of our trouble, as there were many more cases of it than of myasthenia gravis. There is some mistake there. I have never met a specialist who had had personal experience of our case, except one, who said it was when he was a student. Anyway, when the myasthenia gravis injection was first started, they were treating sixteen cases in University College Hospital alone. Furthermore, our case is a genuine myopathy — just a muscle trouble with no nerve complications, and that is the very condition Glycine and ephedrine can help. I just wonder if my correspondent has the particulars the wrong way round?

We listened to Wilfrid Rooke-Ley in a charming radio

piece to-night, he was easily recognizable and fitted the part perfectly.

When M. came she mentioned that her boss had been talking of me — over the *Times* review — and he wanted to know how I managed to write. M. explained, and he sat down at his desk, produced a pencil and began experimenting with my no pressure style of writing. After a while he said it was marvellous that I could do it. Actually if I pressed on my pen it would tire me and probably disable me with writer's cramp. It is rather remarkable: one of the things that amazes me continually is that I should go on trying to do things. Sometimes I get a moment of special clear-sightedness and I realize that there is nothing, no condition, that really is a help to me. Everything I can think of is a handicap. It is a queer feeling getting that kind of objective view of one's self — it is a cold kind of sanity that makes one shake one's head and wonder. Sometimes I see my hands and know they are helpless, and it makes me rather subdued — or very angry — with a kind of disgust. Life is queer.

14<sup>th</sup> November. Election Day. My political conscience was very wideawake and I determined to vote if I had the chance. It is my conviction that all truly democratic legislation must be socialistic in tendency, and yet people are strangely scurrilous at the mention of socialism. When we do not understand, we fear; and what we fear we do not understand. People forget that in the early days of political economy the same kind of battle went on, but in those days it was between the agriculturists and the manufacturers on one side and the landowners on the other. The difference was that pressure

then came from the top downwards, as the landowners wanted a higher share of the 'surplus' as rent. It was Marx who pointed out that the 'surplus' was actually the result of the application of human labour, which gave the enhanced value, and that the labourer deserved some of the surplus which we call profit. For that profundity he has been misrepresented until in some quarters 'Marxism' is worse than the stigma of leprosy. There is something dignified in the word Labour, so that is changed to Socialist — an order given by Lord Northcliffe — although they knew that the term was not exact. We are at the point in economic history where the pressure has become strongest from underneath, and looking ahead one can see how the conflict may end. The go-as-you-please policy which bestowed industrial development with a natural right on the side of the industrialists, will go to the wall, because already the governments have had to step in to keep the peace between the parties, and to keep industry on its feet. Sooner or later one party or the other will gain absolute political power, and so the end will be dictatorship — and that end is already in sight.

When Marx pointed out that a labourer was entitled to more than he got of the exchange called wages, he was only correcting a wrong theoretical idea; it was considered that it was proper to exchange 'equivalents' — to give the worker just enough to replace the energy spent on his employer's behalf — that was an equal exchange. To-day the conflict is still very much the same — the wages are not enough. It is not enough to say that industry cannot afford an increase — that only shows the socialistic tendency to be correct — so that movement has to be fought. It is the State which now takes the place of the landowner and taxes industry (shears off some of the



'surplus') in the interests of national safety — for that is all that doles and pensions really mean, a safeguard of the national interest *as a whole* — rather as though Solomon had suggested giving the child a haircut instead of saying that the 'mothers' should go halves.

This is an armaments election.

My satirical streak keeps reminding me that faith in armaments is very much the same as the faith of the savage in fetishes, for there is nothing to choose between the two attitudes. Actually the same reaction is responsible — the fear element. Let us do to them what we fear they will do to us; frighten them with the things we are most afraid of ourselves. The only result being a rapid increase in actual fear, for there is not the slightest increase in safety.

The nurse came to attend to Mum and Ada and I had to go down to the end room. After a while I heard an electioneering dame addressing someone, and I heard Paddie reply. His knowledge of politics is probably nil and certainly the woman could not get an intelligent reply. Finally she evidently heard the word 'labour' and in shocked tones exclaimed, 'Surely you're not going to vote Labour'. I sat up on hearing that — she might have been talking about some virulent poison, but Paddie gave an unanswerable reply, with, 'I go down to the "Labour" to vote for myself'. I there and then decided that young Paddie could take me out to vote — and I went. Ada followed, and so did Dan.

It was my first visit to a polling booth and I expect it will be my last. Being situated as I am, I should really be indifferent. The solution of all political difficulties is to be found in simplicity — no one needs more than their need, but the majority get less. The trouble is that people

want more, and sophists say that it is in human nature that the weakness is to be found. It is a law of psychology that an impression when received brings up two responses (which might be termed the right one and its opposite, but the only distinction between them is that one is *stronger* than the other). Naturally the stronger response gets its way. If people were educated to know that they need fear nothing at all — that there is enough of everything for everyone, human nature would not be what it is supposed to be — essentially covetous for self-protective purposes. But actually the policy of every government is to keep Demos ignorant of the power in its possession; even highly educated people are ignorant if they do not know how they can be misled. Every one is fooled, but the degree of technique is different; some people are comfortable fools — but fools none the less.

Here is an example. A friend of mine saw a child's copy-book which had been smuggled out of Italy, and the following precepts had to be copied out twenty times by children of seven. 'Jesus Christ came as a Saviour of the world. Mussolini is another Jesus.' 'We know we must love and serve Jesus. So must we love the Duce.' This is on a par with the claim of Mohamet — 'There is one God and Mahomet is His prophet', but it reminds me chiefly of the charge of blasphemy made against Jesus in the 'Son of God' argument in John, and how near blasphemy is that copy-book precept — just one word — 'another' — changes it into a frightful religious satire. But, no doubt it is effective — on children of seven. In another eleven years they will be Italy's fooled heroes.

We stayed up till 2 a.m. to listen to the results; if they had been interesting enough, by providing the kind of excitement we wanted (a close fight) we would have

listened until 4 a.m., but it was soon clear that a two to one majority was inevitable, so we retired. The first gains announced were two for Labour, and someone upstairs cheered.

15th November. M. had a day off and came at 1 p.m. to take Ada to the *Sunday Times* Book Exhibition. I stayed in bed until after they had gone, and had only just managed to smarten myself up by the time they returned at six. The first news was that M. had lost her handbag, which had fallen off the chair somewhere in St. James's Park. It was very annoying, and we blamed Ada for not looking after the bag, seeing that M. had her hands full manipulating the chair. It turned out to be an object lesson in simple faith — if one prefers to think of it in that light. M. felt sure it would be returned (because of the locality it was lost in and because there were no children about). I said: 'I believe it will. Your sort have a special guardian angel', which, I realized, was a most unreasonable attitude. When M. went home we lent her some money until she got her bag back. Soon afterwards she came in again. Looking at me she said, 'You were right', and I silently blessed St. Anthony!

My book is in good company. With my photograph on the stand was a letter from the King's secretary thanking the publisher for a number of copies of *The King's Speeches*, one of the publications on the stand.

16th November. My letters to-day were very interesting; one from an author whose third book is to be published and who wrote me a long letter after

reading the *Tenement* — but did not send it. She heard my broadcast. Another letter was a reply from L. A. G. Strong to a question about novel technique which arose from his review in the *Yorkshire Post*. He ended, 'I very much hope that the book will have the success it deserves' — which is a very nice remark. I hope the book deserves success. Received another two reviews, both good.

17th November. Alfie stayed out all night playing cards with some friends on this estate; a fool trick that young fellows think very grown-up. When he came home he cleaned the windows and then read. Dad went out, probably thinking that Alfie would help Dan with the dinner, but Alfie chose to go to bed. Dad was surprised on coming home to find the dinner still uncooked. We had salt beef with carrots, or alternatively, pheasant and brussel sprouts. I chose salt beef.

Albert and Lil came over and we had the place cleaned to a sequence of hot jazz and Bing Crosby records, interspersed with games of table-tennis. Dan's share was to look after the records, but he soon grew tired. After that, Lil agreed with him that putting on records was a nuisance, so they found a foreign station that provided dance music.

18th November. I was very depressed all day. I had begun to think that I had recovered from those attacks, but this year they have come back with seven other devils. I believe I get a kind of fixation (like Buridan's Ass) through worrying over the things I want to do. I cannot even reply to my correspondents, and the pile grows.

19th November. Eileen Paddie came in unexpectedly.

We did not know who it was opening the door with the hidden key, but when we heard a voice saying, 'Where have you been all this time? I haven't seen you for ages. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!' we knew who our visitor was. She has received notice from her work, so she took the afternoon off to look for another job. She found one — sitting reading by our fire. She is nice to look at and has a rather full face which she makes up very much to her own delight and our surprise. She was dismissed for talking, and I don't wonder.

Later on Dan's young friend and Eileen both said that I looked worn out. M. also asked me how I felt. I suppose my worrying does show in my looks, and I am still awfully depressed. It is gradually forming a definite attitude of mind for me. This attitude showed clearly when a discussion suddenly arose on insanity of the 'temporary' kind. Mum had just read of a suicide and disagreed with the coroner. 'It is not insanity when a person has had enough of it and decides to end it all. It might be poverty, pain, disappointment or disillusion.' Apparently Mum's view was the practical everyday kind. M. was inclined to agree. Ada said, 'It wasn't insanity that made the three people gas themselves down the road. They had been unemployed for years and decided to give the girl a treat for the last time. After going to a pantomime they turned on the gas. It may not be religious, but it is logic — icy logic!' My attitude was to say that if you were influenced by the practical everyday attitude that went by results and found the world a hard and callous place which permitted a percentage of the people to be cast upon the human scrap heap, cast out of society because there happened to be too many workers available,

then that attitude was not insane — unless the economics that caused it were also insane. But, if the suicide led a more or less religious life, in which the evils of the world were recognized and endured as such, then the suicide was an insane act — because it was the opposite of the usual attitude. There can only be two responses, and when one response has a freak element then certainly it is not sane. But, anyway, the whole question is one of convention — apart from the religious aspect. In my cold moments I cannot help thinking that the philosophy that allows man the right to make up his mind, and at the same time imposes a number of rigid obligations, is rather a crazy logic. My own actual attitude is to shrug my shoulders; I have not found life a great adventure, but mostly an unbearable trial, and the only thing I know for certain is that I have to go on. I have often thought of giving up the struggle but as long as I can do anything at all, I must do it. And so it comes about that I enjoy most things, even the fight.

*20th November.* I did not get up until 5.30 p.m. I was tired. It must be a kind of exhaustion; all excitement takes a great deal out of me.

Albert looked in as he was passing this way with the car, and soon afterwards Lil arrived. She did a few things about the house and left at 6 p.m. to do her shopping. It will be a good thing when they live here; we shall be a really happy crowd.

Dan finished his medicine to-day, and as he can only get it at twenty-four hours' notice will not have any for to-morrow. I think the dose he takes is too small; we must talk to the doctor about it and see if he can have the drug ephedrine with the next bottle.

21st November. Mrs. F. came to-day before I was up, and she talked a good deal about Dan's medicine. Although she was worried at first in case we became too optimistic of the hopes of a cure, now she is amused at the way we laugh at Dan who gets lazier than ever. He got up at 5.30 p.m. and said that his muscles were more easily tired now that they are getting some treatment!

We had an interesting chat on what is 'representative' of the working classes. Seemingly we are not 'representative' — because we know a thing or two. It reminded me that a little while ago Mr. James Agate, speaking of his dislikes on the wireless, mentioned the people who 'Don't want to get on'. He had asked one or two boys who had called at his flat in the course of their work. They had said they did not want to get on — and so, for James Agate, that is representative of the working-class mind. He failed to see that those boys of eighteen had already been on the grindstone for anything up to four years. It is my experience that I have never met a child *before* going out to work who did not have ambitions. In my class at school the boys wanted to be — a boxer (was beaten as an amateur in the finals but became a first-class tailor: both of these are hand crafts). A violinist — he was. A priest — he died in Holy Orders. A carpenter — now a partner in a West End firm — and so on. The rest went to work and their ambitions now can be guessed — to keep a good job or to hold on to any job. That is an ambition, however threadbare it seems! I wanted to be a lawyer — but what chance would I have stood of realizing my ambition? This discussion arose because of mentioning an article written for *The Month* by Father Martindale about 'Slums and the Soul'. I and my book (the *Tenement*) were used as an

example, but the second article was stopped as we were not 'representative' — though we had lived in a slum for twenty years or more. True, that if you go back into our family history you may find musicians, a cartoonist, an architect, a master tailor with two shops, and farther back still a General (military, not domestic — as Grand-mother used to say). In this generation we are slum dwellers and have known no other kind of existence.

We all listened to 'Scrap Book for 1911'. It included the Sidney Street business with Winston Churchill as a kind of comic relief — even field guns were called out. The anarchist had the right idea — when two of the three were dead he set the house on fire and escaped. Who would leave a house on fire to watch policemen looking for a man?

The most important item was the Agadir incident — the first move in the Great War. From that time the mobilization orders for the Aldershot Command to meet the invasion of Belgium were arranged and sealed — they were opened in 1914.

*22nd November.* There has been very little coal for some days, our supply is a week behind in delivery, and of course it is quite cold. We lit the fire with coal dust but it was a dismal affair, so we let it go out, hoping the coalman would turn up before long. We had various false alarms with knocks on the door but no coalman appeared. One knock was from our doctor who came to see how Dan was progressing with the new treatment. Doctor thinks he can see a definite improvement in Dan's face, a very slight difference, but one which suggests that perhaps the face muscles are influenced by the medicine.



We hope so. Dan was in bed when the doctor arrived (about 5 p.m.), and when Dan at last came in he looked like a wild man, but not too wild for the doctor's practised eye. Dan is to have the ephedrine as well. Only if it affects his heart by making it thump is he to leave it off. I think it will make him livelier, and if it gets him out of bed earlier he should always take it.

When the doctor saw we had no coal he took Mum's pulse saying, 'We must be careful or I shall be attending you all next week'. Just at that moment a knock came; it was the coalman, and in a short time we had a good fire.

*23rd November.* Dan rose first to-day, which shows how he can rise to the occasion — when the occasion is one of his own contriving. He had an appointment to go to a cinema to see 'Thirty-Nine Steps' and the 'Call of the Wild'. He had gone before we were up and about.

M. had arranged to take Ada to her flat for tea and so for the greater part of the afternoon Mum and I were by ourselves. I had to attend to the fire, but I refused most decidedly to answer the knocks at the other end of the passage. There were one or two knocks — loud ones — but I was conveniently deaf.

When M. and Ada returned we had our tea, and then Dan came in. He was full of 'Thirty-Nine Steps' and told me to see it if I had the chance. I agreed, knowing the chance will not come.

M. picked up one of my books and we read bits of Freud together; not exactly the kind of thing one does as a rule, but we both know something of Freud, so were not perturbed. All this time there was an entertainment on

the wireless. Fancy preferring Freud to entertainment, but I think it was a criticism of the programme.

I suppose that as a result of our reading the discussion that followed was a natural sequence. We criticized the activities of Moses as a religious teacher and thought that on psychological grounds alone religion was much worse than it could have been because of the negative side of Moses' laws. 'Thou shalt not' is the most fruitful kind of suggestion for getting an opposite response that I can think of. It sets up a conflict where there might not be one originally, for there are worse things than ignorance.

Very late in the evening I picked up Alfie's latest cowboy story and began reading it, from the middle. At about 1.30 a.m. Dan took the book from me, sent me to bed and began to read it himself. No wonder he finds himself tired next day; but I see why he likes reading them, for they are probably better than thrillers as 'escape literature'.

*24th November.* I rose just in time for dinner, a large affair of beef, sprouts and potatoes and pudding which Dad always seems to make larger by the size of the portions served. Mum said she had enough for two. After she had eaten what she needed, Mum arranged the rest and said 'That's enough for one', and when Dad came in he pulled a face because he thought Mum was on hunger-strike. Poor old Dad, even our most innocent pranks can be misunderstood.

Albert and Lil turned up late in the afternoon. They set about cleaning and put up fresh blinds, which open and shut like the curtains on a cinema stage, an idea of

Ada's as we cannot climb to pull them across. Dad had washed some of the floors earlier.

We had a talk about the election. It seems that some working men conservatives had argued with Albert because, to avoid an argument, he had said he did not vote. Of course it was pointed out that apathy was the danger in elections. Albert said that nowadays those who talked most about apathy were the ones who should be most thankful for it, as apathy was the worst enemy the Labour people had to face. He made a penetrating remark in saying that the people were really afraid that the working class would suddenly lose its apathy and then the weight of numbers would always be in the favour of the Labour people.

*25th November.* A good old row to-day with Ada — I suppose it is the cold, which makes it rather a struggle for her to get about, but it appears that on studying the cause I was wrong in not answering a question properly. Alas, I am all too often wrong, and it appears like a conspiracy to keep me in my place — rather too much of an optimistic outlook, I should think.

The light went out this afternoon and Dan called in 'Tiger' to put a shilling in the meter. Tiger chatted away, and taking a stool said, 'Ah, you're in the dark, I see. Now shall I put this in the electric or the gas?' As we only have electric light, with gas for cooking, we were glad it was dark so that he would not notice our broad smiles. When he came back he mentioned that he had bought a gramophone record in Woolworth's called 'The Wheel of the Waggon is Broken' and that it was very nice. Then he went into raptures over the 'lovely nursery rhymes' they

have in Woolworth's. 'I could stand for hours listening to them', Tiger said. I am inclined to admire his simplicity; what an adventure life must be for that family.

Eileen came in this evening looking her sauciest in a red 'Sherlock Holmes' cap. She begins work again to-morrow, cleaning and ironing newly made shirts. The hours are long and the wages small, but Eileen says it is indoors during this cold weather and that she will not stay there if she does not like it. I'll give her two days at that job before she decides it is not good enough. For nearly the whole of the evening she sat between my chair and the fire, so that when she rose to go home the warmth rushed past her at me and I knew how little of the fire I had seen or felt during her stay.

I began to reply to some of my correspondents whose letters have gradually grown to a couple of dozen. I wrote seven and then went to bed.

*26th November.* I had not been up long when a friend knocked — Dan had arranged a hair-cutting binge. He talked — politics, of course — and we agreed that a Conservative government was probably the best thing for us, in view of the world conditions.

There is a porter on this estate who, I learned, says that a lethal chamber would be too good for some people here. Anyone would think that he was of a superior breed, and my friend said, 'Take some of the people here; they're respectable, but probably mentally sick. I reckon, if we only knew it, their young lives were hell!' 'Mentally sick' is just the phrase, and plus starvation is a correct analysis of the condition. My friend has almost forgotten what the pleasure of a regular job is like. He mentioned a neigh-

bour who told him that 'the wife' was waiting for a place in a hospital for an operation. 'They examined her', he said, 'and told her she was too weak for it.' He laughed ironically. 'They said, "Go home and build yourself up". You know, George, they've been on the dole for a long time. Can you imagine a sick woman with a family to look after "building herself up" — on the dole?' He looked at me and puffed disgustedly at his cigarette. I nodded my understanding, for there are some things that defy description.

*27th November.* Miss A. came to-day. We always have a good deal of talking when she comes, but it is quite easy, for all we have to do is listen. Most times we enjoy the visit but to-day I noticed Miss A. has a cold. A cold introduced here has, before now, put nearly the whole family at death's door, and as Miss A. sneezed I wished she had postponed the visit.

She was interested in Dan's new treatment and on learning that it was of American origin showed increased interest. We also talked of the novel which she liked because it was sympathetic and constructive instead of antagonistic and destructive. An attitude of mind clearly showed there — a social conscience that on being moved does not want to be hurt by much truth. I suppose that is a hard saying, but there is much in it that is incontrovertible — not even the socialistic press will readily tell the truth about social conditions. I remember being told by a friend who travelled in a distressed area in Wales, that she laughed in the street there, and the inhabitants looked round to see who it was who had suddenly gone 'laughing mad'.

28th November. My letters this morning were interesting and very pleasing, and included a card from Ethel Mannin. Mrs. G. St. A. wrote to say that *Neighbours* had the charm of being written by one who knew the people from the inside. Also, she asked if I were still intending to write a Lourdes book. Of course I shall write it, but it is not a book to be undertaken lightly. I must wait for the necessary feeling — which has been somewhat crowded out by work and worry. Another letter was from a man in Nottingham — ordering fifty copies of the book for Christmas gifts. That's the kind of thing an author dreams of!

I heard this evening that recently two Hindoos were walking round here and they asked various people, 'Where does George Thomas live?' Finally a boy told them and they walked past the windows apparently satisfied. Now don't tell me that my fame has reached the Orient! Actually I have had letters from India, and even Japan, but none of those people have come to England just to walk past my door. I'll wager there is a simple explanation; I must ask Dan to investigate in his best Sherlock manner. He will deduce the correct, and of course the elementary, solution.

When nurse came I had to go to the end room. I tried to play the piano, but it was a failure as I could not sit up straight enough. Now that I cannot cross my legs, I cannot play unless someone else crosses them for me. I have to do that to straighten my back sufficiently for freedom and balance. What a life! About the only thing left to disable me completely is an attack of writer's cramp. One of my less pleasant pastimes is trying to think of further handicaps: my only freedom is in talking or writing and I'm not pleased with the sound of any one

voice for long! My novel was written under every conceivable difficulty, ill health, serious illness, noise, a room full of people, unwanted interruptions, chatter and the wireless; and all manner of bodily discomfort. It surprises me that there is so much freshness and spontaneity in the writing; and critics have found humour and charm. Looking back, I am as amazed as anyone at the cussedness of the human spirit that keeps on pegging away, asserting itself over an ever encroaching physical condition. What purpose has Life, I wonder? It expresses a conscious power that is worthy of the highest name, or else it is a silly chemical accident. What a choice for an intelligent person!

29th November. Dan wanted to talk to me about the reported Italian atrocities in Abyssinia. Did I believe the report? I did. Then Dan asked if I were being cynical, and I think he was surprised when I said I was not cynical at all. I suppose he finds it difficult to believe that it is one way the Italians have of carrying civilization into a savage country. That is cynical. I asked him if he remembered any book, read in the last couple of years, in which physical orgies were mentioned, and after a while he recalled *San Michele*. In it, Dr. Munthe ascribes that kind of thing to the activities of Nature intent on making up for the loss of life. What an intelligent being this pagan Goddess is! Dan wanted to know what that had to do with his question, and why was I confusing the issue? I said that those atrocities had a simple explanation — one that always goes with sudden death — fear. In all wars *that* horror will occur because fear affects the blood distribution in the body, with

atrocities the consequent result. Dan would not believe me, but I had to assure him that it was the opinion of one of the best psychologists.

It is surprising, sometimes, the kind of question that comes up for discussion. After a while Dan mentioned hormones, and it led to an argument because he said that I was wrong in saying that hormones are the secretions of all the ductless glands — he says there is only one hormone. I don't know much about that, but I surely think that all ductless glands secrete hormones. That comes of careless reading. Dan has probably read from the same book, and that makes one of us wrong. Like Mum, I think I am always right — which is wrong.

*30th November.* Dan was up early to-day, to go to the cinema once again, and, I as usual lately, was last up; in fact, M. was here and helping with the breakfast before I asked Dad to pull me up. Naturally enough, Mr. D. called for the games of chess before I had finished drinking a cup of tea. What the family says to me at such times is, I should say, pointed rather than effective. I think I am getting tired of the convention of being 'just so' for the sake of company, and I am probably rather tired. All this year I have endured a great nervous, and consequently emotional strain, which I am normally not equal to coping with. It seems I must make up my mind to work at full pressure all the time, because if I don't the backwash of strain is more fatiguing, and if I don't work at all I feel so relaxed as to be worse than useless, and to be alive and useless is worse than being dead, for one dead does give the impression of having



fulfilled a certain purpose. One can say that a dead person has reached completion.

In the evening I wrote a few letters and found that I owe fourteen still. A letter came from a reader of *Neighbours* but it had been sent to Cape's! This shows how the reader was affected by reading the *Tenement*.

Bed seemed very attractive but I did not feel tired. I went to bed about 2 a.m. feeling that I would not get much sleep.

*1st December.* Rose just in time for dinner at about 4 p.m.

Albert and Lil came very late, but he had been working until four in the morning. Waiting outside clubs on hire service. I think it is a disgusting display of selfishness and most of Albert's hire-work has been like that. He is far too sensitive for that sort of work, and even when he does not get time for dinner prefers not to say anything. Albert is the 'faithful retainer' kind of worker; it is a pity he does not get work with a family of some tradition.

*2nd December.* Up early for Holy Communion and the visit from Father H. It was a bitterly cold morning, but, strangely, I did not feel it while dressing; I had the feeling that it might have been a spring morning. Afterwards I felt rather cold in the back. The little service is always very beautiful: I have to make the responses in Latin, and I often think that I am just about to forget what comes next—I listen to myself almost anxiously.

Afterwards Father H. served our breakfast, and in a

talk that followed he said that it was surprising how respectful dustmen, navvies and the like were to him.

A friend came in the evening for me to sign three copies of *Neighbours*. We talked of books — she promised me Dimnet's *Art of Thinking* and recommended Ethel Mannin's *Venetian Blinds*. Printer's errors arose as a topic and she mentioned a typist's error she made once. Her firm was installing some heating apparatus in Hull, and in the letter she typed, 'We are sending engineers to Hell to take the temperatures'!

By the last post came a very good review from the *Manchester Guardian*.

*3rd December.* I had not been up for more than an hour when I received a long letter from Ethel Mannin. She is sending me a copy of her *Venetian Blinds*. I also received a copy of *I, James Whittaker*. Whittaker is a working chap and his autobiography is interesting. Like myself, he should to all intents and purposes have died a dozen times but he survives to tell a tale. My narrowest escape came from the medical profession — those sometimes careless devotees of Aesculapius — who gave me a general anaesthetic directly after seven weeks of pneumonia. His escapes, so far in the book, have been from bad accidents.

Mrs. B. called later than usual and we got talking. All of us were included in a discussion of the problems relative to mothers and children; apparently children repay good with evil, and so on. I refused to be drawn, because I think that motherhood completes itself. What comes afterwards is not a question of parentage, but of the relationship of individuals in their environments. Any-

thing that happens over a period of years is just a question of applied personality in as many instances as there are people. It seems to me that there is always some relationship between what happens and the kind of characters involved — as though the situations were conflicts from projection of differing characters. This talk arose from a remark on the last section of my book where 'Mary Ann' realizes her difficulties are due to herself 'being too clever in not having children'.

Later on, when M. came in, a talk arose on vaccination and vivisection; we were all anti-this and that. Animals have no rights (that's philosophy), but it is wrong to inflict *unnecessary* suffering. 'Words, words, words' — Shakespeare's profoundest remark! Vaccination is a theory. In India they vaccinate by the hundreds of thousands and it does not prevent a huge death roll from smallpox. 'It's dirt as does it.' Can anyone imagine how effective it can be to educate the corpuscles to remember that once they had a banquet of specially prepared, fattened, juicy germs in cow pus, so that they not only remember the feast but pass on the memory of that banquet to the following generations of corpuscles, in case another should occur. That's vaccination.

It is my conviction that all disease occurs because of a wrong chemical balance in the constitution; in a word, 'deficiency'. I have no right to say that, but I believe it none the less. In a way it is true because we believe that if there had been 'more of this' or 'not so much of that' this or that would not have happened. Pulmonary troubles are temperature deficiencies; blood stream infections are obviously due to an 'over-infection' — because of a deficiency — actually, if enough blood could be used soon enough it would be better than a disinfectant.

Cancer is probably a chemical condition parasitic upon another chemical condition which is too weak to overcome the parasite. In fact, I am sometimes driven to think that perhaps all is theory. I think of the Mendelian theory, propagation (chemical action again) and all the hereditary ideas based on it, and I wonder what fertilization has to do with it at all. The eggs of some fish have been fertilized by being in water with a higher salt concentration than usual. In another instance a needle was successfully used to impregnate an egg. The difficulty is to get a human ovum to experiment on — after all, the only known thing is that the sperm impregnates by intrusion, and perhaps a needle would do just as well. What an inferior article man is, to be sure!

*4th December.* To-day Dad had a very dull homecoming.

He was very wet from the rain during the night and when he came home there was no fire ready to dry his clothes — there never is on the very cold days — and so instead of lighting the fire he went out again. I rose at four, Dan at five-fifteen, so I suppose he had some cause for complaint. It is bad luck that the cold plays such tricks with us, but it cannot be helped. Poor old Dad.

We listened for the book talk and had a great thrill in hearing Miss Helen Simpson telling us all about *Neighbours*. One of the best reviews and the most comprehensive. 'Mary Ann — that old sinner', was mentioned particularly. I grabbed a pen to take notes, but it was so smooth and interesting that I just listened.

Ada was telling Dan's friend that once when she went to work the snow was 'up to the seat of this chair' (he had said he disliked rising at 7.45 a.m. in the winter), and

Dan butted in with, 'What was that chair doing out in the snow?' We all grinned, but I looked askance at Dan — what further terrors of criticism are in store for me, if he can catch Ada out in that way? I begin to shake in my boots.

We listened to 'A Bill of Divorcement', and found it good but in some way unsatisfactory. Perhaps that is always the case when human ailments have the centre of the stage. Insanity as a cause for divorce, and the play showing one evil of the 'new law'. I think that perhaps it is an error to interfere with what happens in life. If 'love' comes to a man or woman who is tied to an insane person, I think that they will find a way out of the difficulty, however 'moral' they may be. The whole problem is one of 'suffering', and people think it is evil that anyone should 'suffer', but such an 'evil', unlike pleasure, does not surfeit one. It helps one to grow, in the fullest sense. And I think I am more than a little qualified to say that much. It seems unreasonable to me to expect a world to contain happiness that does not also contain sorrow — they are the poles of experience, and much nearer to each other than they seem, for at the dividing line they touch. The way to disconcert anyone is to ask them, 'Are you Happy?' or 'Are you Unhappy?' The reply in most cases will be a doubtful 'I suppose so' for happiness, and a decided 'No' to unhappiness. I always suspect that the greatest human weakness is not vice but self-pity, and 'suffering', in the ordinary sense, is that kind of weakness; when the time comes one discovers that one can endure prodigies of real suffering of a kind that, while it hurts, helps one to understand the greater glory of the even tenor of existence, that unappreciated level which so easily sways towards joy, peace and beauty.

*5th December.* Very cold to-day so we all rose late. These rooms seem little warmer than the street, owing, no doubt, to the stone floor. Ada is invariably the first one up these days, and this change took place after her return from Pinner early in the year. Dan now is always the last up.

The piano-tuner called this evening. He talks and talks; every few minutes he thinks of something, from politics to the stories in newspapers. He objected that the ordinary working man is always made to appear illiterate or 'half-cracked', and it was a libel. I agreed, though it would strain one's abilities to put some working-class men into a book without making them one or the other. In the middle of it Alfie came in and the tuner talked to him for a quarter of an hour about motor bikes. Just before the piano was finished M. looked in — she had two heads of celery in a bag. The tuner would have started a conversation on them but he confessed to a headache.

Later on I wrote letters until 2 a.m.

*6th December.* I have been reading all day. I am a very slow reader; this is from my schooldays when I had the highest possible respect for the printed word — a respect which has been sadly shattered; now, I think it is the essential dignity of print that most impresses me, and after all one can be impressed by the printed word, without reading it. But I sometimes doubt if a book, as a whole, is good when a review gives the number of pages, and it does not help me to want to read it, but when they also give the weight, then I am left speechless in admiration of the gentle art of authorship. Nowadays the threat to throw a book at one's head can be terrifying.

I am not the only one deep in a book. Alfie has surprised the family by asking me for the Bible (Catholic version) which he intends reading from beginning to end. Mum, rather irrationally, thinks this a sign of a change of heart, but I have my doubts.

Young Bill enjoyed himself this evening going for the errands; he is a very bright little chap and has a good memory. We talk to him as though he were fully grown up, and he is not a bit shy.

I wrote a few more letters in the early hours.

*7th December.* Received the copy of *Venetian Blinds* from Miss Ethel Mannin.

When the milkman came I called him in to pull me up in bed, so that I need not wait until Dad or Alfie came in. I used to get the butcher boy to do that for me when he called for the orders each day, and when he left we changed our butcher — partly because the young chap used to tell us the best days on which to buy their sausages and the like. 'We've got some good legs to-day,' he would say, or 'The sausages are fresh, Gin' (Ginger). The milkman has done the job for me very often, but I have not yet asked the baker. He calls too early.

When M. came it was too foggy for Ada to go out with her — they were going to see a film. We all sat round the fire, except Dan who had gone to a cinema despite the fog, and by chance we had a good talk of reminiscences. It began by our telling M. of the stark poverty in *I, James Whittaker*, and it led to the comparison of some of the things we knew or that Mum remembered. The dodges of people with only a few coppers to feed a family; cheap fish, cheap meat (described as 'block ornaments' in *Num-*

ber Five John Street), cheap bacon, or even bacon bones. People would come from Summers Town to the West End to get the benefit from a carefully spent twopence. Although unemployment is a national evil to-day (in those earlier days the evil was less widespread but much harsher), there is to-day the slight alleviation of the much maligned dole. It is not the dole that is wrong, but the attempt on one hand to keep a large proportion of the populace quiet though at starvation level, and to impress the majority of the electorate with the idea that everything is getting better. When in work Dad, before the war, received *less* in wages than a man would now with the same size family, but out of work. That, however, only shows the fearful hardships of a class that can hope for little in this scheme of things. The true apologetics of politics has yet to be written, and I expect we shall have to wait for another Aquinas.

During the talk I said something that made Mum and Ada disagree with me; they let me 'have it' with no light hand, but I turned the tables with, 'Listen to them, M. How they "go for" poor unshrinkable me'. Mum laughed heartily as she said, 'Unshrinkable is right'.

*8th December.* Albert and Lil came to-day just after dinner. We talked of books for a while and then poetry. Albert quoted parts of *The Deserted Village* by Goldsmith, so I sent him into my room for the book — which Albert asked me to lend him. We had some fun recalling the pieces we knew. Albert thinks of rhymes while waiting in his car, and so I offered to lend him books on writing. Then he said: 'I woke up this morning with a plot for a perfect murder — perhaps it was because Lil was snoring . . .'



*9th December.* It is still very cold and we are made very uncomfortable by it. Dad comes home and the place is obviously cold and miserable, and yet as often as not, even after getting wet through working all night, he sets to and lights us a fire; alternatively, he occasionally says a few 'blasts' and tells Dan to light the fire. What a life. If I had a lot of money I would ask Dad to retire so that he could enjoy a few years' rest, but as it is he must go on until he reaches the age limit; then he will get a pension which will pay our rent and do little else besides.

Alfie continues with his Bible reading. He asked: 'Was birth control a sin in the Old Testament?' I said that it was and would have shown him the authority, but he continued — 'I thought so. Every time a child is born it is called a blessed event.' Mum told me that his idea was to read the Bible right through so that he could argue with me. It looks as though I shall have to do some reading.

I wrote eight letters to-day.

*10th December.* Mum asked how the quadruplets are going on, so we said the papers reported that they were gaining weight. 'Three more soldiers and a nurse', she said. That just shows how the world trouble influences the mind. Mum has a horror of wars — she thinks of our helplessness apart from the general horror. Then we talked about the Peace conversations in France and we decided that it was too involved with the idea of oil sanctions to be really honest. Abyssinia will go down fighting, and everyone knows it. Mum said that the talk of peace was just getting Christmas into world politics — strictly for the season.

I noticed one little item lately. Companies are being

formed to bore for oil all over this country. To get a new idea link two old ones. Ergo: if oil is found in England the League of Nations is doomed. Why? Because oil is the one product that can now, by being withheld (say by sanctions), cripple any belligerent nation — as we have found out about Italy — that is why sanctions for oil will not be applied. If England has oil she can be independent of the League — as she was previous to the Italian trouble.

11th December. Heard to-day that a man on this estate now in a military hospital is in a critical condition after an operation in which a large piece of shrapnel was taken from his spine. No wonder the chap had a temper and rather powerful dislikes. For eighteen years or so he has periodically been in hospital with a recurrent wound in the back. He has no war pension. Land fit for heroes.

Received *The Female Felon* from Miss Helen Simpson to-day autographed for a Christmas gift. I had written thanking her for the review on the wireless last Wednesday. Unfortunately *The Listener* has not reprinted the review to-day. I hope it is only a postponement, for it seems ridiculous not to reprint book reviews if they are thought good enough to take up wireless time.

I sent Alfie out to buy *The Listener* and he came back laughing. The newsagent has a twopenny library and evidently is also doing a little business as a bookseller, patronizing only local talent apparently, for Alfie saw he had just served a lady customer with two copies of *Neighbours*. The bookseller whispered to his customer as Alfie entered and the lady murmured, 'Oh, is he. How interesting'. I think that Alfie's peaked driving cap must have

felt rather like a halo for the moment, with the flush of reflected glory. An author is an awesome thing God wot.

*12th December.* Two interesting letters this morning.

One from an artist in Chelsea, who has fixed an appointment for to-morrow at 5 p.m. He is a friend. The other was from Cecil Hunt, the man who did the 'Howler' books. I sent him a howler this week, for which he thanks me, and also mentioned my novel.

Lady Y came to-day; she was pleased because a niece had sent her a letter in which it is mentioned that Claude Houghton had read *Neighbours* and said that there was 'much talent' in it, but that I had 'watered-down' some of the characters. That is a literary opinion, one based more on literary fashion than fact, I think. I have not shown the worst side of the characters because it had nothing to do with the plot. If I had wanted to write about a lot of vice perhaps I would have been nearer to what the literary world expects. I am not objecting to what Claude Houghton has said, but I do claim to know the people and not to have misrepresented them.

Dan's friend tidied up three rooms for us and even laid the fire in the front room. A very nice young chap, he is only seventeen. Dan does find some good friends. They plan to go camping together next summer.

*13th December.* We were up late, and the visitor coming at five. Just as I was going to shave, Mrs. F. called, but I got on with shaving. She spoke to me occasionally and I replied waving the razor at her as I talked. If it had been an open razor it would have looked threatening.

Mr. R. came and we were soon talking pleasantly. I think he is a Cambridge man, from his accent; used to be a doctor, but after the war, turned to painting. We talked of writing, chess and music. He asked me if I had read Stewart Macpherson's harmony books, and I had. He has studied music also. I expect that at some other time we shall play chess. He asked me if I would like to go to tea at his studio, some day when the weather is better, to see some of his work. I was very pleased to accept, saying that I would ask Alfie to take me.

Have been reading an American Catholic magazine, and from the editorial I received a very clear view of their sceptical attitude towards the Italo-Abyssinian war and the League, especially the part Great Britain has played. It says that ultimately our Empire will crush England, and sees a similarity between our desire to safeguard the Suez Canal and the American interest in the Panama Canal, which they took because they needed it. Apparently the Philippines are the weak link in America's armoury, just as India and Australia are ours. And if Japan were to claim or take them, as Japan may, would the Americans let them have them without a fight? Japan is also the danger to Australia and India for us, so the analogy goes further. The conclusion is that England cannot permit a powerful neighbour too near the Suez canal. Which, after all, is obvious. I believe that our attempt to find oil in England is an attempt to simplify our foreign policy — which is getting rather involved.

Late to-night Dan was breaking wood for the fire with his hands, taking a box to pieces. As the pieces broke off he exclaimed, as though he were breaking out of prison, 'They can't keep me in here.' A sense of humour gets us out of many a corner; fancy laughing at his own

inability to go out of doors. But perhaps he feels that his new treatment is doing him much good. I hope so.

14<sup>th</sup> December. Had a note from Mr. D. to say he thought it better not to come as he had a bad cold, so I had no chess to-day. He hopes to come next week. The cold weather is a great trial for us but on Saturdays Dan 'braves the elements'; fog and cold have no terrors for him — when he wants to go to a cinema. He took thought for his friend, and had ham sandwiches and hot tea ready when he came straight from work. They had to hurry because it is dearer after 3 p.m. I was up before they went.

When M. came, Ada asked her if they were going out, and received a decided negative in reply. It was too cold for M. We set to and had breakfast.

We talked of reading as M. had brought me *Author-Biography* by Cecil Hunt to read.

Mum mentioned that three girls who had been lost on the Yorkshire moors for five days had prayed to St. Anthony, the patron saint for things lost. I always feel a great sense of wonderment on such occasions, especially as the girls were found. My sense of wonder was shattered by Dan. (Being Catholics we are proud to think that there may be a good deal in such events — we have cause to be thankful to St. Anthony ourselves.) And then Dan said, 'Lost Baggages'! In his most religious moments Dan can be funny, but it certainly was a 'wise-crack'.

15<sup>th</sup> December. Sunday, and the chief event, the dinner, was a failure. Dad has a cold and Alfie and Dan stayed in bed until the dinner was about to be

served. We found the beef very much under-done; Dan said that the heat could not get through the texture of the joint, but it was not as tough as that really. Alfie had been late in buying the meat and apparently took anything he could get. By the time Mum had relieved her feelings the rest of us had indigestion as well. And can Mum say things!

I read Cecil Hunt's book. I thought it interesting but very journalistic. I found a reference in the book to his visit here. It is grim reading but I sensed how much he felt when he was talking to me. He came as the Fiction Editor of the *Daily Mail*, and was interested in my diary. The thing that surprised me more than anything else was to find that he is only one year older than I am. It made me wonder whether I am still 'boyish' in my mind, but I thought that he was anything up to ten years older than I am. He commented on the 'beauty' in our home as it contrasted with our physical limitations. I often think of him, and although it is unusual I was not very surprised to find that we were one of his experiences. Even in his very busy Fleet Street days he remembered his visit here.

Lil and Albert came along in the evening — Lil came first as Albert had to work on his 'day off'.

16th December. Father H. came in to see us in the afternoon, just as we were having breakfast. He said that he is very busy, and Dan said, 'The Christmas rush'! Even in religious circles there are rush periods. Father H. smiled and went on to explain that he had the task of attempting to get some of his parishioners to 'Embrace the sacrament of matrimony — despite the presence of several children'. In fairness the case men-

tioned was a registry office ceremony, but for Catholics that is living in sin. Even as an abstract idea marriage should be *only* a church affair or else it remains a legal contract — like buying a horse or a cow. While the origin of life remains a mystery I firmly hold that marriage is more than a legal affair.

I gave Father H. a large review of Frank Brangwyn's *The Way of the Cross*; he is a friend of the priest, through his father, the artist. Father H. saw the paintings some time ago. He seemed to think it was thoughtful of me to remember, but actually it was the first thing I noticed on opening the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Eileen Paddie came in the evening. She has left her laundry job after working there a fortnight. I believe it was in a place where they only wash *new* shirts, but when I asked Eileen why she left (hoping to hear something of the working conditions) she said, 'I wasn't going to wash Duff Cooper's shirts.' A very amusing political turn to a more serious discussion. Later she asked me, 'Have you got another word for "Goofy"?' I shook my head. 'Look; the author has not got a word for it.' She laughed. She carries my photograph about with her, so perhaps she does not think too badly of me for not knowing another word.

*17th December.* Alfie was too ill to go to work this morning. He has a cold. The firm sent an errand-boy round to see if he were going to work, and later the despatch-clerk came to see if he could fetch a doctor, as he wondered if there were anyone to do things for Alfie. It happened that the doctor came along of his own accord to see how Dan is getting on with the new

treatment. Owing to a misunderstanding we have not obtained the ephedrine for Dan to take, and the doctor was expecting to see some results from it. The doctor said that Alfie has 'flu'. But it is not bad as he has no temperature.

Young Paddie called to tell us about his job. It is awful. He works at a wharf and has to carry two hundred-weight sacks of soda up a steep stairway into a room, where the ceiling is so low that he has to bend his knees to enter, and then gradually empty the sack into a vat, and the steam nearly blinds him. The acids burn his hair and rot his clothes; I wonder what it will do to his eyes in time? But, he is glad to be working. I suppose that is dignity of labour — at thirty shillings a week. He will be ill and lose the job that way, but I hope he keeps his sight. He told us why he left work early to-day. 'I walked in and said "I'm going to 'ave a tooth out" and the guv'nor said "Righto", so I put me coat on and walked off. You know, the tooth was nearly driving me crazy all day.' He went to the dentist and had gas. 'Oo! I went right past the moon. It wasn't arf fun. Just as I was going on the moon the bloke said, "Come on — step down". He asked me where I'd been, and I said, "Oo, you couldn't go there, I went past the moon." Apparently the dentist laughed, I know we did. So he gets his fun having his teeth out by gas. Ah well, life has its compensations.

*18th December.* Ada fell out of bed at 2.30 a.m. this morning but was not hurt — she does things gracefully; although she finished up under the table, her feet were still in bed. She slid gently on to her neck. Fortunately Dan was still up cooking Dad's dinner, so he



roused Alfie who got up and replaced Ada in bed. If Alfie had been unreasonable, she would have had to make herself 'comfortable' until Dad came in at 4 a.m.

I had two letters from one person by the first post, they were to make an appointment with a psychologist for 11.30 in the morning. Alfie telephoned and fixed the meeting for 5.30 p.m. though I would have wished it put off until after Christmas. The secretary lost one letter so had to go back and write another: I felt that the psychologist should give his secretary some treatment to develop her business ability.

My visitor had some difficulty in finding the house and was late. He did not have to take a great deal of trouble over us; he wanted to see if anything could be done by auto-psychology to help us, but said almost at once that he knew his limitations. He told us of a progressive muscular atrophy case that he had helped slightly, but he said that we had the brain to do all he could do for ourselves — if we did not give up. Mum made him smile by saying that we did have enough brain to see us over the week. There was a good deal of talk on the types of disease he had cured, even tuberculosis, but he admitted that results were as problematical as they were amazing.

At midnight after the dance band there was the very dramatic announcement that Sir S. Hoare, the Foreign Secretary, had resigned. I cannot remember a more unusual statement on the wireless. It seemed to sum up a nation's attitude to a world-wide problem. That a Minister of such a powerful Government as ours should resign *before* facing the House indicates the immense power of public resentment.

We have heard a rumour that the people next door are to move upstairs and that Albert and Lil are to be given

the rooms. We have not heard a word from anyone, but as it seems that the people next door are the ones who are doing the talking, it may be correct. If so, it is the best piece of news we have heard for months. I am particularly pleased, as it shows how the officials have our needs in mind. When years pass and we have to struggle on, it seems that it is foolishness to hope for better things from the housing authorities, but though they are silent they are not always slothful. I do hope it is true. I cannot imagine a better arrangement than that for the good of everyone. It will be as though Albert is at home again.

It is a good piece of Christmas cheer.

*20th December.* There was a loud knock on the door this morning and by the time Ada had dressed no one was there. She was annoyed. That was about twelve o'clock.

At 3 p.m. she had the bright idea of lighting a fire; she had been sitting freezing all the time. It was so cold that she put on her outdoor coat — before she realized that a fire is warmer. As I got up to a nice fire I could afford to laugh at her.

Just as we were having breakfast Lady X called, apologizing for interrupting our tea. She was profuse, but Mum put her at ease by saying we had just finished, so Ada and I said it was breakfast and not tea — which seemed very funny to her.

Some Christmas presents have come from readers of my books — which is very pleasing, and exciting.

*21st December.* Mr. D. came to-day and I lost three games of chess to him; my brain would not function on my side of the board, but I pointed out a three-

move mate that neither Mr. D. nor Dan could see for Mr. D. It was a stunner; a Queen sacrifice, too.

Dan was feeling the Christmas spirit so he went up West to see our old house and a few friends. The house is to be offices for a film company, and amongst the people Dan met were Mr. and Mrs. Matthews, parents of Jessie Matthews. Mr. M. saw Dan first and called his wife over to talk to him. Mum said that she is glad that no one can live in the house where we saw so much pleasure and suffering over twenty years of our family life. For months the house was left partly built as our old landlord went elsewhere, after the trouble of getting everyone out of the place.

*22nd December.* We had a surprise visit from Aunt Emma, a great-cousin of ours. She is 69 and very lively. She had brought Dan and myself each a pair of braces for Christmas. Her first words were, 'How do you like my new hat? I get a new one every three years.' Then came a good deal of talk about her son's relatives — one family in Australia, the other in Essex. She is a talker with a very humorous turn of phrase, not averse to a little scandal, either personal or reflective. She told us of a grandson who has grown into a 'fine, big boy'. 'I don't know if I'm father's or mother's,' she said, 'but Frank, my grandson, is like father's people, which is a blessing; though sometimes I think I'm like Uncle Walter, poor devil.' (An uncle on grandmother's side.) Dan thought he would continue the kind of talk so he said, 'It's warm where Walter is', and Aunt Emma had the grace to be shocked.

She told us of her recent removals. One place had a

noisy wireless and after a quarrel she told the landlady 'To stick her room in her eye', and added, 'she knew what I meant'. About three years ago while she was working as a companion to an old lady ('who could not get anyone to stay with her'), Aunt Emma rented a room and furnished it out of her wages and pension — 'In case anything happened.' I thought that extremely plucky at sixty-six years of age. Now she struggles, not unlike my 'Mary Ann', to make ends meet on an inadequate pension. She saves up a penny now and then so as to visit her son, who gives her a little more than the visit costs in fares as a gift; we reckoned that each time she visited her son she made twopence-halfpenny in profit.

Auntie came to see us specially to make sure that we did not forget to send her a Christmas card, and she had brought her new address all ready on an envelope. She said she would post a card to us at nine o'clock to-morrow morning. That was her parting remark.

*23rd December.* To celebrate Christmas Ada has caught a cold that looks like an attack of influenza. When Dan rose he took his thermometer and went to see how Ada was. After a few minutes Dan let out a yell. 'Mum. She's swinging the lead', from which diagnosis we understood that Ada had no temperature, though when Dan came down to us he said that Ada's hands steamed when taken from under the blankets. Perhaps his yell to us was only his delicate bedside manner.

M. came in the evening and on hearing that Ada was not well, she went and sat with her.

Someone is generally ill at Christmas, and certainly the bitter weather has been a great trial. At one period I was

ill every year on Christmas Day for about eight years in succession.

To-day we have been enjoying the arrival of presents and cards. Mum is always very pleased when anything eatable arrives, whereas I like opening letters or parcels.

*24th December.* I have mislaid that Christmas feeling, and I keep reminding myself that there is a lot of goodwill about, and plenty of rain. It is very quiet on this estate and I miss the noise and bustle of the market place at Christmas, where it was exciting just to watch the crowd doing its Christmas shopping; it was a sight we would never miss even in cold weather. Before the stalls were licensed by the Council, Christmas week used to provide us with a good deal of excitement. On the Monday before Christmas there was always a scramble for pitches, when anyone who got into place first was entitled to the pitch for Christmas week. (I imagine that in earlier years there were many bloody battles for pitches.) Normally the pitches could be claimed by the first one in at 6 a.m., and many a fight have we watched as a struggle for the pitch went on morning after morning until the police intervened. But for Christmas the pitches are claimed at midnight, and it was worth watching. Once I saw a mother and her daughter fighting by strategy for a position; as midnight struck, the mother, a fat, little old woman, triumphantly placed one trestle in position and sat on it as though enthroned for the week; but her daughter, a great hefty Irishwoman pushing a barrow, calmly wheeled into position and in the process pushed the trestle and the old woman, who no longer sat enthroned,

out of the place. That was considered as legal tactics. Another time two Jews were fighting for a pitch. They both had their women folk helping them. I was surprised to see that one man allowed the other to take up a position on the kerb that would have ensured victory. There the man stood waiting for midnight to strike (on a Sunday, too), with his trestles, his wife and family all near him, a kind of mass formation. The position looked hopeless for the man who regularly held the pitch, but as midnight approached his wife put their trestles on the pavement, but nearest the wall, not the kerb. With admirable timing the regular man then walked up to his opponent and began to say all he could think of in Yiddish; just then the signal went for the stall people and, ceasing to swear, the Jewish strategist shouted in English, 'Don't you push, Mister Pushinski,' and with a double-handed hefty shove sent the man sprawling in the middle of his family. At the same time his wife handed over a trestle and they each triumphantly sat on one in position. Those were the good old days.

I began my Christmas reading with *Little Man — What Now?* a good story, but rather hurriedly written, I thought. However, I appreciated it, one cannot say 'enjoyed' when it deals with the counterpart of our unemployment problem in Germany. It does give one a clear idea of the difficulty Hitler had to face and why only brutality could meet the situation.

Ada got up this evening so as not to spoil the atmosphere. She sat at the foot of Mum's bed in the living-room. M. came and after a while took some invitations to some very poor children on the estate for a Christmas party at the Guildhouse. She was away some time and came back very affected; we knew at once what had happened —

she had been into the people's rooms and seen the bareness of everything.

Earlier M. had gone down to see Dan who was meeting some of his estate friends at a window in the end room. When Dan came in we had tea, and I saw him playing about with the crockery. M. served the tea and sat down to stir hers with a trick spoon. She laughed and quickly handed the spoon back to Dan. She had been caught with her own gift. Later on Dan's friend fell for every trick Dan had, from the sham sugar which floats, to the match-box that vibrates. It was really funny, for he tried to shake the match-box from his hand and thought it was electric because in his fright he held it tightly.

We lit our Christmas candle, a pound one, and just then the electric switch in the scullery broke, so the candle was taken in there to be useful as well as symbolic.

It grew very late and we wondered if Albert and Lil would come as they had promised. We knew that Albert was working late, but just when we had given up hope Ada heard a car pull up outside. It was 12.30 a.m. and the car had brought Albert straight from work, with Lil. He had a large bunch of greenery, including holly and mistletoe, and also a decorative basket of fruit from Sister Anthony, our Sister-of-Charity who so often visited us in the tenement.

I read on till 3 a.m. and then went to bed.

*25th December.* I woke up on this Christmas morning to find that goodwill had seized hold of Alfie 'good and proper' and that he was cleaning the windows, while Albert put up the holly and leaves in the living-room. My most pleasing letter this morning was

from A. G. Thornton of the *Star*, which was not only seasonable but interesting. Very soon there were exciting sounds outside the house and in the midst I heard bag-pipes and drums with children shouting and booing. Evidently some kilted Scotsmen had invaded the estate despite the efforts of the porter, who discreetly went to look for a policeman as the Scotsmen were (1) a nuisance, according to the by-laws, and (2) on private property. However, the band was encouraged with a shower of pennies and we were treated to some Scotch screeches — I don't know another word for the sound. The band went round the estate and away, and the porter came back without a policeman. Then he came in to mend our broken switch and I heard him speaking in broad Scotch.

The street door was open, so a neighbour poked her head in and shouted Christmas greetings down the passage. When the pubs closed we heard a crowd of people telling the world that they were 'Henery the Eighth, they were'. In fact there were at least nine of them.

Then came dinner. Stuffed and boned turkey ('filleted' Dan called it) and pork, with veg. Dad was a long time serving us all and then nearly forgot Dan. After that the pudding. I had three helpings, two dressed in cream and one in the nude. Then I drank a glass of ale and felt that I was comfortable enough to rest.

We heard the King's Speech, which was very good, an intimate, almost affectionate address. Dad always stands to attention when 'The King' is played, and it was no exception to-day, in fact we had two lots of loyalty and respect in one as the next item on the wireless was the National Anthem from Bournemouth. Dad stood it through, holding a dinner in hand; but while he did so



Dan found a medal to pin on his chest. It was Dan's dinner he held.

Young Paddie turned up just then asking if we had heard 'The Old Man' (His Majesty to us), and Dan promptly caught him with every trick he had. When the fourth trick had been played on him (the match-box) Paddie said, 'What, is this *another* joke?' I thought they had fallen flat, but evidently it was his way of showing a rather stolid appreciation. Later on, Dan gave him a rubber pencil to write down a card score and he said, 'Why don't you give me a pencil?' I think the joke was on us.

We all greatly enjoyed the B.B.C. Christmas Party. I thought the best joke was by 'Clapham and Dwyer'. Clapham said, about a hippopotamus, that it could move 'faster than *you think*'. Young Paddie classified those comedians very aptly when he said, 'Clapham and Common'. All I can say is 'Very'.

The big flop of the evening was Gracie Field's broadcast from S. Africa — nothing but atmospherics.

We listened to the Wireless Appeal for the Blind by Lord Sankey, who wants to collect £12,000. The government gives blind people a free licence, but I wonder if any government ever did as much good with as little money as it could do if it supplied the wireless sets as well? I wonder how much poison gas £12,000 would buy? Quite a lot, I expect, and of the kind guaranteed to blind people, I suppose. What a horrid thought for Christmas.

We listened to the dance music and then played cards, as young Paddie wanted to play 'Rummy'. I watched until I understood, and then joined in. I went to bed at 9 a.m. on Boxing Day.

*26th December.* I rose at 3 p.m. and felt as fit as I have ever been. Christmas agrees with me. Albert had to go to work at 4 o'clock, but he did not intend overworking himself. There was nothing to do at the garage.

It was a very quiet day. We might have had a noisy party here but the plans went wrong. At about nine in the evening 'Mitch' (Beattie's husband) came in expecting to find all of our relatives from Aunt's family here, but something had kept them away.

Lil left for home and our Christmas was over.

*27th December.* When M. came we were all still in bed; she put the kettle on and lit the fire for us. We all managed to get up by the time she had breakfast ready. She is very good and we should have been ashamed of being in bed when she came. She had come up specially from Kingston to take Ada out. I passed the time trying to break nuts, but after catching the skin of my hand in the crackers I gave it up. I should have tested Dan's muscles.

Mum and Dan are coughing in chorus with chest trouble. Dan seems to have forgotten his thermometer, but he is not bad. Mum is the worst because she has pains as well. If she does not improve we must send for the doctor.

*28th December.* Mum had a very uncomfortable night but picked up rather well in the daytime. Ada seems just a little sniffy and Dan barks a little, otherwise things are not too bad. Thank goodness the weather is not cold.

29th December. Mum is a little better this morning and is rather strict on preventing people from smoking in the room. Alfie chose to bring in a cigar present, and Ada, not knowing a cigar was alight, exclaimed, 'What a smell of burnt pepper'. As Alfie would not take his cayenne out of the room we made him sit 'up the chimney' until the smoking finished.

Father H. came in this afternoon and, spotting our mistletoe, seated himself under it with an expression of wrapt expectation, but nothing happened, except that Dan laughed derisively. The priest's social conscience was very active and he railed against the good people he knew who 'defrauded labourers of their wages', which was enough to make anyone 'Bolshie'. A good lady on being told that a footman had no recreation time replied, 'He has plenty of time between ten and six the next morning'. Economics in a nutshell.

Father H. looked at his watch, and Dan saw there was no chain. 'What, have you pawned your chain?' he asked. The priest smiled and replied, 'I suppose that when you see me in my cassock next, you'll ask me if I've pawned my trousers'. Becoming comparatively serious Father H. mentioned the servant problem as it affected priests. There is a law of the Church which says that servants must be *supra adulta* (in practice not younger than forty) but as they could not find one of forty they got two of twenty.

Albert and Lil came over late to ask us if we had 'heard anything'. We had not, so he gave me a letter in which he is offered two rooms upstairs in this building. We were delighted and it seems that he can be in here early in the New Year. It will be a happy reunion as he has been away over three years, since his marriage. They want

to get settled quickly as, early in January, his wife is to have a baby — a girl, Lil has decided.

*30th December.* A card came to let us know that Mrs. G. would be in to see us this afternoon, rather late. When Dad came in he lit the fire for us and pulled me up. We kept Dad busy tidying the place.

Albert, with the help of a friend, brought some of his furniture over in a van, anticipating getting the keys, but he was told that his furniture would have to be fumigated — a new rule for people moving into the estate; the Council have a bright yellow van for the purpose, and so far one family has been 'disgraced' by its use. Albert was in a fix as he had already put his furniture in our end room, and my bedroom. Later on Alfie received the keys from the head porter — three front door keys. We, of course, made much fun of the third key — one for the baby.

Mrs. G. brought her sister with her. They talked of Christmas and had a funny incident with a turkey; the young man who trussed the bird used a white-painted stick as a skewer and there was consternation when the cooking began to smell of burning paint. I was asked if I had thought of reviewing; I said I had, but that probably no one would give me books to review. I would like to review working-class novels principally — a limited ambition.

I received a greeting card from an old friend who has not written to me for five years; he is an old man, so I doubt if it is quite a resolution for the New Year.

When M. came she asked me if I would lend her my diary to read — she meant the first part of this effort. She promised not to lose it between here and her flat.

31st December. Mum is getting better slowly, but she has sleepless nights, which cannot be helped under the circumstances. Our doctor is away, so having got some medicine from the dispensary, Mum is at the mercy of 'Dr. Dan', whose method of diagnosis seems solely to be the taking of the pulse, and not observation of the rate of respiration. Nature is the best of the two, as doctors, no doubt.

To-day we shall see the old year out, by the eating of nuts and dates and figs, and the drinking of Wincarnis — our substitute for port and stronger alcohols. We shall have the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' by the people on the estate who make a 'Ring o' Roses' game of it at midnight.

M. came to stay with us to welcome the New Year, so we sorted out crackers, which contained caps and mottoes, like 'My heart, pierced through with fierce delight, Burst into blossoms in thy sight' — a couplet by no less a poet than Tennyson. I suppose the poet felt like a rose bush, or else his ideas on the propagation of flowers were a bit mixed. We did not pursue the reading further. We listened in, and became quite convivial when the Wincarnis was poured out.

Albert looked in. After doing his shift in the garage he was asked to volunteer to drive the boss about for the festivities and all-night celebrations, so Albert 'volunteered'. It meant an extra eight hours' work and for 'overtime pay' he was to be given seven hours off.

Of all things on this evening, capital punishment was mentioned, and I nearly had fits of laughing at Dan's objection to it. He said he was overdue at the time of his birth, and as an explanation the doctor found a knot in the umbilical cord, or whatever it was. 'So you see', said Dan, 'I have a pre-natal aversion to strangulation, of

which being hanged is only one form.' I think Mum enjoyed his remarks more than anyone. I suppose Dan also has a pre-natal memory.

Dan also warned me that my hard labour was to begin from January 1st, when he ordered that I am to begin writing again. There is the Lourdes book that I want to do, and also a novel, which has been in my mind for four years or so, and this may claim precedence.

As Albert's furniture filled my room, I had no place to sleep in. I tried to stay up with Dan, but I had to retire at 3 a.m. and go into his bed. He cheerfully tucked me in, and went back to look after Mum and get what sleep he could in my chair.

*1st January.* To-day is noteworthy because it marks the beginning of Albert's residence upstairs, signified by the nailing down of linoleum, the banging of fingers and thumb with the hammer, and the hanging of pictures. They were both very tired by night time, Albert from overwork and Lil from worry. Last night, Lil did not know that Albert had to work all night, so she went home and found that the friend with the van had taken most of the household goods, including the bedding, but had left the bedstead. She only had the bare mattress and her overcoat, but she pluckily stayed there, expecting Albert home at every minute. After midnight, a friend of Albert's, who lives in the house, brought Lil a cup of tea and a cheese sandwich, and offered to stay with her, being very nervous of her condition, but as he had his own domestic partner to consider, the offer was gently declined.

When Lil told us of her plight she said, 'It made me

realize how awful it must be to be really desperately in need.' She could not sleep, but I suppose she dozed, for she mentioned starting up every time she heard a step outside. None of us would have slept a wink if we had known what she was enduring so near the time for the confinement; but, like Lil, we breathe more easily at the thought that to-night there is no long trek home for them. Happiness mingled with relief at the knowledge of their nearness; it is as if Albert were home again, and we are very happy. Albert said that he cannot realize it yet, and I can understand his twofold relief, for however prominent his own affairs were, he always had us at the back of his mind. Now we are all at home, in every respect, and it is a great comfort.